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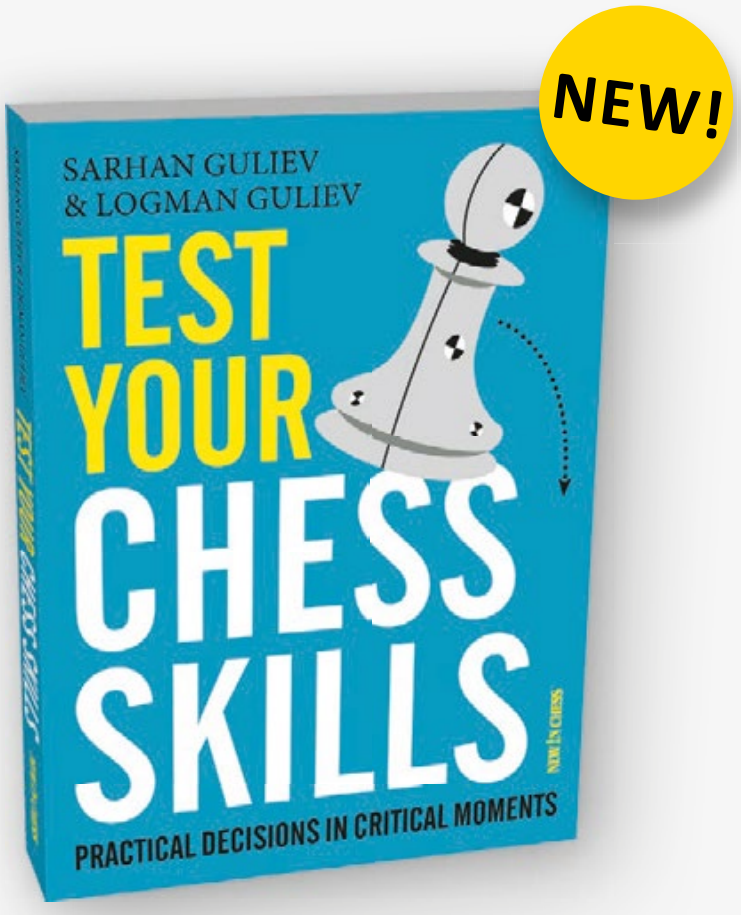

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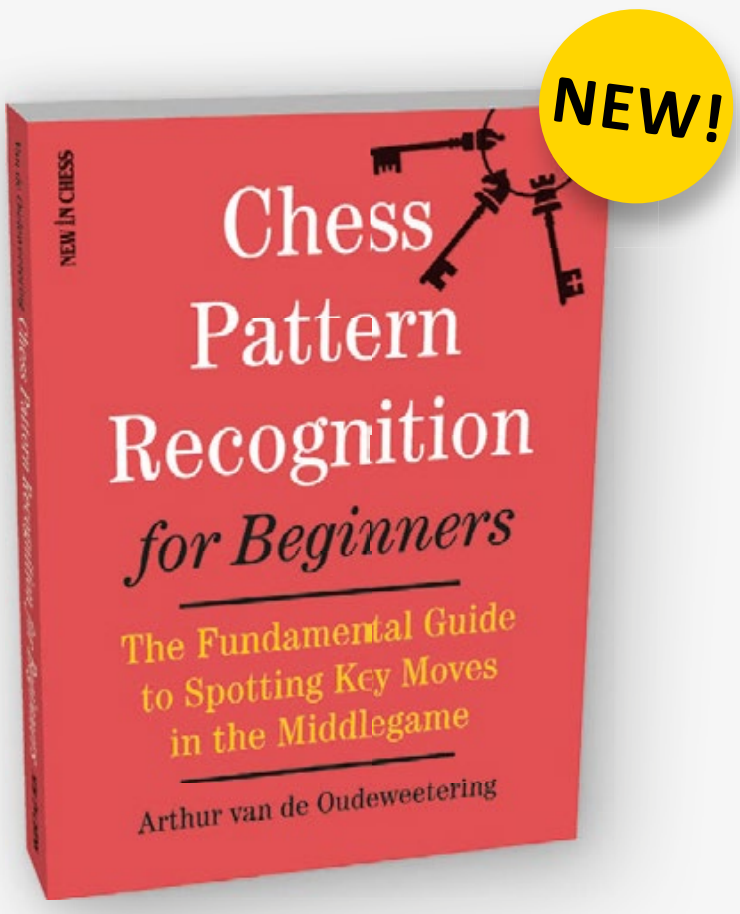

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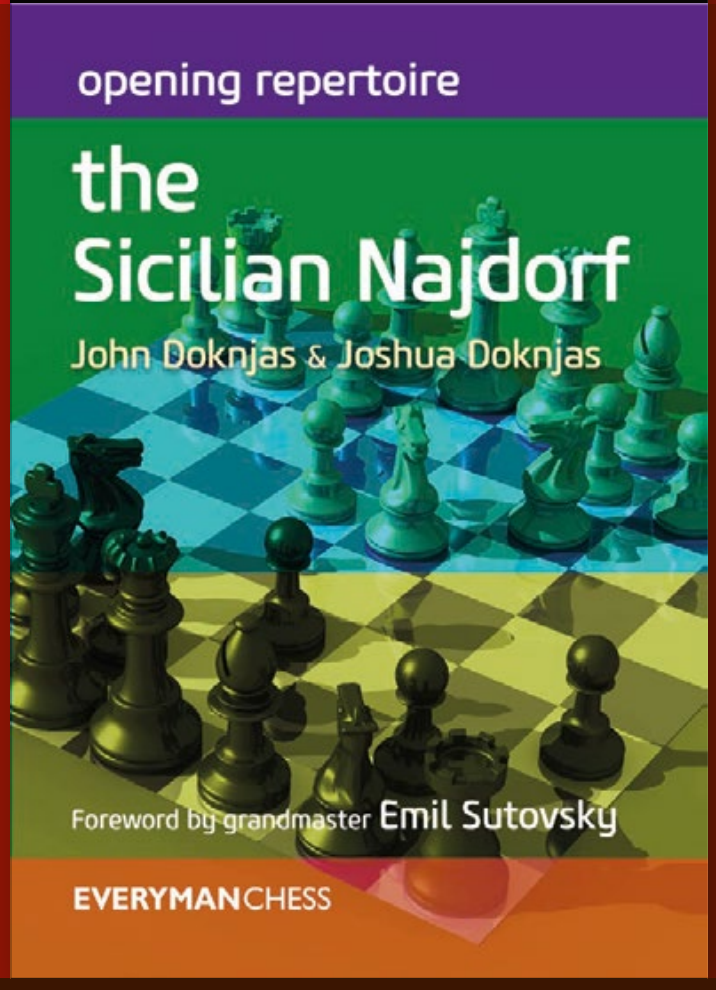

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Opera Game

Morphy at the opera is perhaps the best-known game in the history of chess. Paul Morphy, the top player of the mid-1800s, won a delightful blindfold miniature against two ennobled amateurs while attending the opera in Paris. Now Morphy's rise from child prodigy to his epitaph of the 'pride and sorrow of chess' will form the backdrop to a new movie on the tragic American genius.

'The Opera Game' (theoperagamemovie.com) is due to be released early next year with screenplay by Ken Mask and directed by Monty Ross, who has worked alongside Spike Lee in hit movies 'She's Gotta Have It', 'School Daze' and 'Malcolm X'. It stars Blaine Kern – who also starred in the 2015 Oscar-winning movie 'The Big Short' – as the adult Paul Morphy and Ryan Grego as young Paul. Working as chess advisor to the project was Swedish grandmaster Pontus Carlsson.

The period piece will not have a big theatrical production, but instead be made available for the small screen, streaming services, DVD and for download. The project is aimed at highlighting 'hidden figures' from the past to a newer generation, who would have perhaps never heard of their life story and impact on history. ■

NIC's Café

Cheers

Those chess-mad Norwegians know how to do things the right way. On the eve of Magnus Carlsen defending his crown, a new chess-themed pub, 'The Good Knight', opened in the heart of Oslo's downtown night-life district. It has proved to be an instant hit with hundreds of customers packing in each evening. They found chess sets on every table, a grandmaster serving behind the bar, and Magnus on the giant TV screens, as everyone followed the live NRK chess action from London.

The brains behind the venture is – wait for it – Magnus' first chess trainer, GM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen, who went into partnership with friends Kristoffer Gressli and Lars Petter Fosdahl. The original plan the three founders had was to open a chess centre with a café, but one of them had a brainwave: 'Why not a pub?' And why not indeed!

'We had a feeling that it would be popular, but it has been above expectations,' said Ringdal Hansen to the local Norwegian media at the end of a very successful opening week. 'There has been an incredible number of people who have stopped by, and we have received lots of positive feedback.'

And what's not to like about a pub where the barflies are experts on the Grünfeld Defence, the Guinness comes out of a tap that's a black knight and where you can get copies of *New In Chess* from behind the bar? A pub not so much where everyone knows your name, but also your game – we'll drink to that!

At 'The Good Knight' the Guinness comes out of a black knight.

King's Gambit

It's never too late to mend the past. That's the tagline of the new CBS show 'God Friended Me', a lightly humorous feel-good series that centres on Miles, an outspoken atheist whose life is turned upside down when he is friended by

A scene from 'God Friended Me' shot in Washington Square Park.

God on Facebook. Unwittingly, he becomes an agent of change in the lives and destinies of others around him.

We think more by accident than design, but halfway through the London World Championship Match, Episode 9 was titled 'King's Gambit' and featured Miles and his gang of do-gooders trying to track down a reclusive Harlem chess genius, described as 'the next Bobby Fischer', who disappeared under mysterious circumstances 10 years ago, never to play again after he lost a key tournament game to his rival, who is now terminally ill.

The missing genius had the very chessic name of 'Graham Hastings', and there was lots of wonderful scenes shot in the famous chess hustler arena of Washington Square Park in New York City. There was also a moral to the tale and a happy ending of sorts. It turns out that Graham's cancer-stricken rival, Aleksander, was seeking forgiveness by confessing that he'd cheated in the game he'd won after finding key opening analysis in a notebook our chess genius had left unguarded. But he needed more than forgiveness; he wanted Graham to be his young daughter's chess coach after he died, as she had a God-given talent for the 64 squares, the same as Graham had in his heyday.

Can someone please pass a handkerchief now?

The Daily Show

Another popular US TV show that had a good pre-World Championship feature proved to be 'The Daily Show', once the haunt of the irrepressible Jon Stewart, but now with Trevor Noah at the helm, the South African comedian famed for his quick wit and often politically-charged satire.

His guest on the eve of the Carlsen-Caruana match was Maurice 'Boom!' Ashley, whom Noah tweeted '... brings his Brooklyn energy – and trash-talking – to chess.' The barbs came thick and fast during the very lively and entertaining 5-minute segment, and Ashley gave just as good as he got in the exchanges, whilst at the same time making the case for chess being exciting for a large mainstream media audience.

After asking Ashley how someone becomes a grandmaster, and it being explained to him, Noah came back with, 'Okay, so just like "Mortal Kombat", then?' And, of course, it goes

Maurice Ashley was his buoyant self as he appeared on 'The Daily Show'.

without saying that Noah just couldn't resist ending the segment without getting a jab in at Donald Trump's expense. Ashley: 'When you play chess you realize... it's not *my* best idea that really counts, it's yours. How am I gonna beat you? It's by really studying what you want and that's how deep strategy comes into the game.' Noah: 'So, you're saying we need to teach Trump how to play chess?' Ashley: 'That's gonna be really hard.'

Juga

There's not many that can say that they have been inspired by playing against the Caro-Kann Defence; but for the chess-loving Chilean singer/songwriter Juga di Prima, this proved to be the case when she was playing in a tournament in Rome last December. She thought her position from the Exchange Variation so strong, but got carried away with the emotions of the

NEW IN CHESS

A radiant Juga at the world title match in London.

game, allowed her opponent counterplay, fell into time-trouble and lost.

After analysing the game, Juga felt she didn't understand chess at all, so to relieve her frustrations, she picked up her guitar and started to write a song about it all. The lyrics, she said, came easy to her, as she crafted her first chess-inspired pop song, 'Oh Capablanca'. It was released in mid-August with a cleverly-crafted accompanying animated video that led to her being invited to perform her song during the closing ceremony of the Batumi Chess Olympiad and Judit Polgar's Global Chess Festival.

Now Juga has followed up with a second chess-themed song, 'Isolated Pawn', again accompanied with another slick animated video. Juga explains on her website that, in this song, she 'goes through the human emotions of an isolated pawn, first in person, as if I was alone and undefended in the middle of the chessboard.' It was released just in time for the run-up to the Carlsen-Caruana World Championship Match in London, and she was invited to attend the match after her successful Olympiad performance.

Déjà vu

Have you ever had a sense of déjà vu after reading *New In Chess*? Lennart Ootes, the ever-travelling, forever snapping chess photographer had that feeling in Kolkata as he was covering a new event on the international circuit, the Tata Steel India Chess Rapid and Blitz tournament.

He was tasked to photograph the players on a visit to a very special chess club, with no idea where he was being sent. It wasn't until he got there and started to take out his camera, that it suddenly hit him: 'Hold on... wasn't this the same chess club I was just reading about in NIC before departing for India?' Yes, the intrepid photographer had been sent to the Gariahat Chess Club that meets under the busy city flyover, as featured in our previous issue!

The inaugural Tata Steel India Chess Rapid and Blitz tournament, a satellite event to the Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee, proved to be a resounding success, with three days of rapid followed by two days of blitz. The all-star field featured Hikaru Nakamura, Wesley So, Levon Aronian, Shakh Mamedyarov and Sergey Karjakin doing battle on the home-ground of top Indian stars Vishy Anand, Pentala Harikrishna, Vidit Gujrathi and Surya Ganguly, with spots also going to rising young Indian stars Nihal Sarin (rapid) and R. Praggnanandhaa (blitz).

In the end, two recognised speed mavens shared the honours. Nakamura won the rapid tournament a half point ahead of Harikrishna and Aronian, and then went on to tie with Anand on 12½/18 in the blitz – but

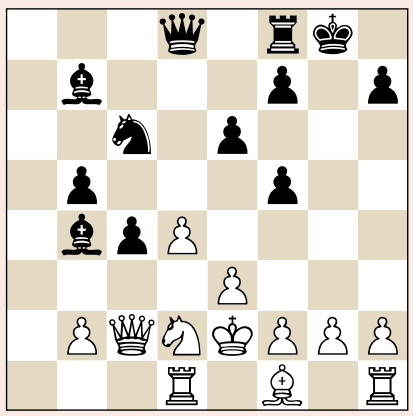
LENNART OOTES

You're right! That's the flyover where the Gariahat Chess Club gathers.

Anand gave the very patriotic home fans a little something extra to cheer about, as their hero went on to win the two-game tiebreak match to take the title.

Here is a neat tactical finish from the blitz by Nakamura.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Hikaru Nakamura
Kolkata Tata Steel Blitz



position after 16.♖d1

16...♕xd4! Splat! The fork on d4 would be an easy win. So... **17.♘f3 ♕f6 18.b3 ♗c3 19.♖c1 ♗b2 20.bxc4 ♘b4! 21.♕b3 ♗xc1 22.♕xb4 ♖a8 23.♘d4 f4 24.♕xb5 fxe3!** Mamedyarov's king is caught in no man's land. **25.♕xb7 ♖a2+ 26.♔d3 ♖d2+** 0-1. ■

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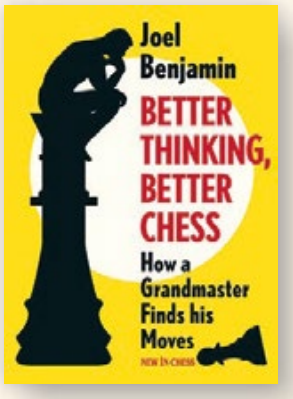

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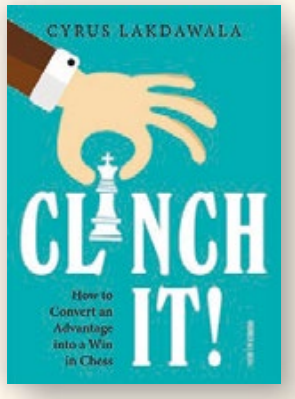

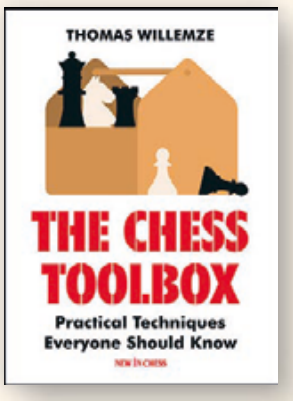

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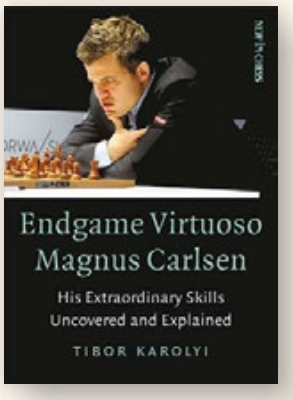

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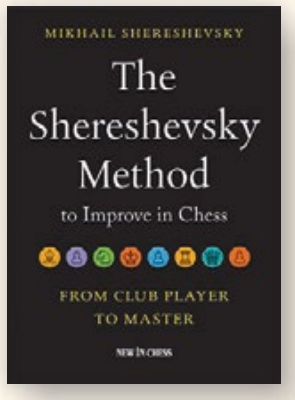

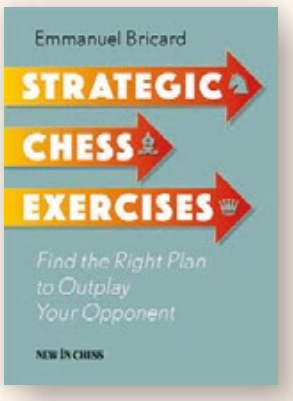

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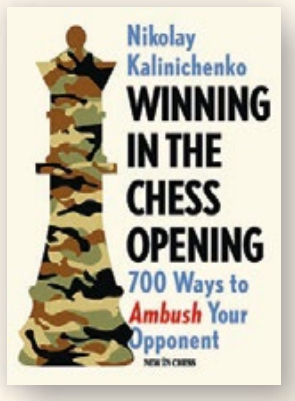

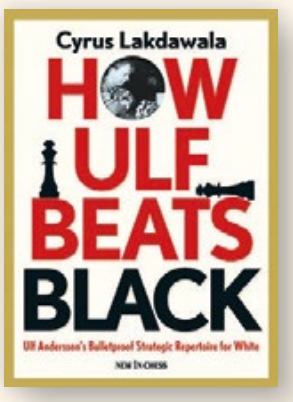

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GM Glenn Flear, Yearbook 127

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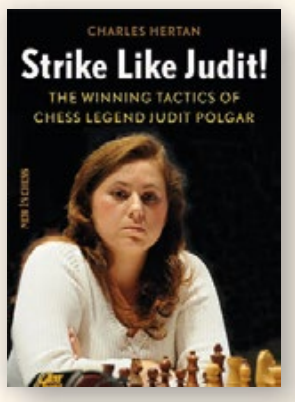

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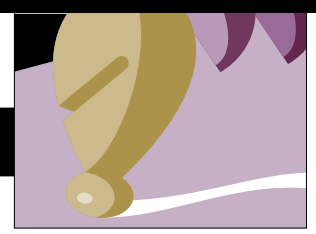

Two different games

Magnus Carlsen has just won another Rapid World Championship – not a Classical World Chess Championship. On his own admission he 'chose the path he felt would give the best chance to retain his title'. Tellingly, he also said, 'In Classical chess he (Caruana) has at this point just as much right as I do to call himself the best in the world'.

Classical chess, in its pure form, is a battle of ideas. Rapid and Blitz chess are crude in comparison. We only analyse them for the purpose of establishing the blunders – there is little point in pursuing variations which the players have no chance of seeing with so little time to think. One could say that Classical Chess is 'thinking man's chess'.

Richard Sugden
Sao Paulo, Brazil

A disgrace

I have played chess for over 60 years – mostly at the patzer or slightly above level, but I've seen enough contests to think this World Championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana was a disgrace. In the first game Carlsen missed a good attack that even I saw. Caruana, as the Challenger, should have been a Tiger. Instead, he played very conservative chess. It was obvious to me after the first couple of games that Carlsen would be happy to draw all of the games and go to the tie-breaker speed games where he is dominant. They both should be disgraced.

Bruce Margolin
Playa del Rey, CA, USA

A future legend?

As a strategic step to retaining the World Championship, I think Magnus Carlsen's decision to offer a draw in Game 12, while enjoying a significantly better position and substantial time advantage, was correct, given his domination in speed chess.

I also think that in that moment of offering the draw, he excused himself from ever joining the ranks of the 'super greats'. Can you imagine Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine, Botvinnik, Tal, Fischer or Kasparov offering a draw in such circumstances? A worthy World Champion, yes; a future legend, never.

Jim Robertson,
East Kilbride, Scotland

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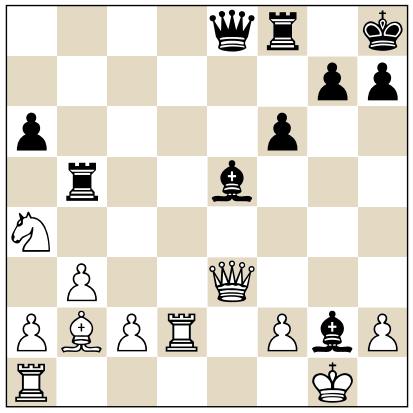
More than meets the eye

In New In Chess 2018/7, Jan Timman analysed the brilliant game Aronian-Mamedyarov from the Batumi Olympiad. In the critical moment after 23...♗xg2!



Aronian accepted the bishop sacrifice with 24.♔xg2, but later made some mistakes and lost the game. In his notes, Timman logically suggested that Black's attack could have been extinguished with 24.f4!, 'forcing the exchange of queens. After 24...♗xb2 25.♕xe8 ♖xe8 26.♘xb2 ♗h3 27.♘c4, Black doesn't have full compensation'.

This is certainly true and made me wonder why Aronian did not choose this apparently more practical solution and allowed Mamedyarov to continue his attack instead. I would like to suggest that Aronian did not play 24.f4 because he was concerned about his king's safety after 24...♗b7!?. Black prepares a battery on the long diagonal and this looks really scary for White: 25.fxe5 ♕c6. I think that just the sight of the exposed white king would deter the bravest of souls from entering this position. However, White can justify his play with a very precise (and hardly human) defensive sequence: 26.♕f4! g5 27.♕f5 ♕h1+ 28.♔f2 ♕xh2+ 29.♔e1 ♕g3+ and now 30.♔f1! (30.♖f2 is met by the strong 30...♗c8! – the point of 24...♗b7 – and White falls under a strong attack) 30...♗f3! (now 30...♗c8 is met by 31.♖d3! and White wins!) when Black has the very strong threat of ...♗f3-g4-h3+, but White has the cool-headed answer: 31.c4!! and after 31...♗g4 32.♕f2 ♗h3+ 33.♔e1 ♖xe5+, he gets a winning position with 34.♔d1!, when the king can escape to c2, thanks to 31.c4. Impressive stuff!

These complicated variations show that there is more than meets the eye after 24.f4. Perhaps, 24.♔xg2 was indeed a more practical choice.

Davorin Kuljasevic
Plovdiv, Bulgaria

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INFOGRAPHIC

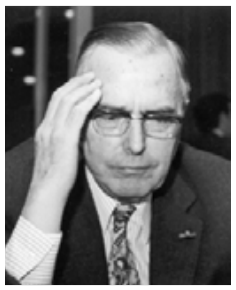
FIDE's Presidents and the World Champions: A History

The election of Arkady Dvorkovich as president of the World Chess Federation, or FIDE, in October ushered in a new era for the game's governing body. Dvorkovich is only the seventh person to lead the federation since its founding in 1924. Here is FIDE's history, as seen through the tenures of each of its presidents and the World Champions. *DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN*

FIDE PRESIDENTS

Alexander Rueb
Netherlands
1924-1949
One of the founders of FIDE, he helped the federation become the official organizer of the World Championship.

Folke Rogard
Sweden
1949-1970
Created the process of granting grandmaster and international master titles and introduced international rating system.



Max Euwe
Netherlands
1970-1978
He oversaw the 1972 Bobby Fischer-Boris Spassky match and stripped Fischer of the title when negotiations for the 1975 match fell through.

Fridrik Olafsson
Iceland
1978-1982
Opposed by the Soviets who were unhappy with his handling of the matches between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Kortchnoi.

Florencio Campomanes
Philippines
1982-1995
Substantially expanded the number of federations in FIDE, but he was plagued by scandals and resigned under pressure.

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov
Kalmykia
1995-2018
Continued the expansion of FIDE, but he was also plagued by scandals and eventually faced international sanctions.

Arkady Dvorkovich
Russia
2018-present
A former deputy prime minister of Russia, he won a three-way race for the president.

WORLD CHAMPIONS (Classical lineage; does not include FIDE champions from 1993-2006)

José Raul Capablanca
Cuba
1921-1927
World Champion at the time that FIDE was founded.

Alexander Alekhine
Russia and France
1927-1935, 1937-1946
His death opened the way for FIDE to control the title.

Max Euwe
Netherlands
1935-1937
The only World Champion to ever become the head of FIDE (see left).

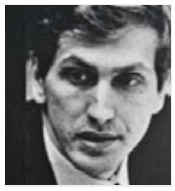
Mikhail Botvinnik
Soviet Union
1948-57, 1958-1960, 1961-1963
The rematch clause for a deposed champion allowed him to regain the title twice. The clause was abolished after he won the title for the last time.

Vasily Smyslov
Soviet Union
1957-1958
He won the title in his second match against Botvinnik.

Mikhail Tal
Soviet Union
1960-1961
Ill health contributed to his loss in his rematch against Botvinnik.

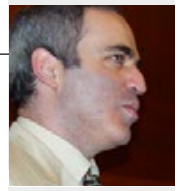
Tigran Petrosian
Soviet Union
1963-1969
He defeated Botvinnik to win the title and then Boris Spassky to defend it in 1966.

Boris Spassky
Soviet Union
1969-1972
He won the title on the second try.



Bobby Fischer
United States
1972-1975
He forfeited the title after he and FIDE could not agree on terms for a title defence.

Anatoly Karpov
Soviet Union
1975-1985
His two successful title defences against Viktor Kortchnoi in 1978 and 1981, and his dominance of the tournament circuit in the late 1970s, showed that he was a worthy successor to Fischer.



Garry Kasparov
Soviet Union, Russia
1985-2000
He and Nigel Short split with FIDE in 1993 over the organization of their title match, but most people continued to recognize him as champion until he lost the title to Vladimir Kramnik, his protegé.

Vladimir Kramnik
Russia
2000-2007
He helped FIDE reunite the crown when he played, and defeated, Veselin Topalov, in 2006.

Viswanathan Anand
India
2007-2013
Claimed the throne in a tournament and defended the title three times in matches.

Magnus Carlsen
Norway
2013 - present
Since defeating Anand in 2013, he has defended the title three times.

Fair & Square

Theresa May: 'The negotiations for our departure are now in the endgame.' *(The British Prime Minister speaking on Brexit at the Lord Mayor's banquet at the Guildhall in London in mid-November)*

Jorge Valdano: 'It will be a game of chess without kings.' *(The pre-game analysis of the former Real Madrid forward for the late October Barcelona v Real Madrid 'El clásico' matchup, with both Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo not playing)*

Allison Pearson: 'We need a chess grandmaster to wrangle with Brussels, not the runner-up in the 1973 Towcester tiddlywinks competition.'
(The front page commentary by the Daily Telegraph opinion writer, as she ridicules Prime Minister Theresa May's chess metaphor for Brexit)

Christopher Yoo: 'What I like about chess is the geometry of it. I like the beauty of the game. I like the tactics.' *(The new 11-year-old rising star of US Chess, who in September became the youngest Cal State Champion in history, beating GM Sam Shankland's previous record by five years)*

Jean-Michel Blanquer: 'I, like you, am a great lover of chess. I think it gives many benefits in life, that's why (...) I encourage chess anywhere, including at school, because we all know its virtues are the virtues that you will experience during these championships: the sense of strategy, concentration, respect the opponent, both intellectual skills and values.' *(The French Minister of National Education's video address to children competing in this year's French Youth Championships)*

Hermann Mattison: 'Chess is a small but independent republic.' *(The early 20th century Latvian master who, in 1924, won the first Latvian Championship followed by the first unofficial Chess Olympiad in Paris, before the event became a team tournament)*

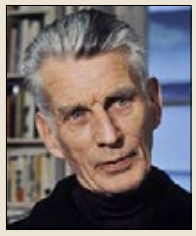
Simon Singh: 'The most recent research, however, suggests that chess in schools does not help improve maths, which I find surprising.' *(The Bafta-winning filmmaker of the BBC film 'Fermat's Last Theorem', and the author of several popular science books)*

Nihal Sarin: 'Both have simple rules but become complicated when we dig deep. Both also are a great way to further our mental capacity.'
(The young Indian chess prodigy, on the relationship between chess and mathematics)

Vladimir Kramnik: 'We are old chaps, and it is difficult to play nine games in a row.'
(The ex-World Champion explaining on the Isle of Man live broadcast why he and fellow ex-Champion Vishy Anand both utilised on the same day the rare in-tournament option of a half point bye and a rest day)

John McCrea: 'I'm reminded of what writer Rebecca Solnit told us back in 2016 during the Presidential Election: "A vote is a chess move, not a valentine."' *(The lead-singer and founding member of the alternative rock band Cake, speaking during a get-out-the-vote campaign for the US midterm elections in Texas for the Democrat Senate hopeful, Beto O'Rourke)*

David Edmonds: 'These days, in amateur as well as professional chess, mobile phones are banned or have to be switched off – they would ruin fair competition far more decisively than any cocktail of steroids pumped into a professional cyclist.' *(Writing in the November 'Prospect' magazine, on the influence of computers and AI in chess)*



Samuel Beckett: 'At this point Mr. Endon, without as much as "j'aboube", turned his King and Queen's Rook upside down, in which position they remained for the rest of the game.'
(The avant-garde Irish Nobel Prize winner in his early novel, 'Murphy', where the eponymous protagonist plays a very unusual and protracted game of chess with Mr. Endon, a patient in a mental hospital)

LONDON

Carlsen's Choice

World Champion again defends title in rapid tiebreak

In a historical first, all classical games in the World Championship in London were drawn. After Magnus Carlsen had failed to convert a winning attack on the first day of a tense and tightly contested match, the initiative gradually shifted to Fabiano Caruana.In the last two games, the World Champion repeated his strategy of two years ago and deliberately steered for a tiebreak. A choice that was widely criticized, but proved highly effective, since he smashed his Challenger 3-0 in 'three hours of terror'. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** reports from the British capital.

It's hard to argue with success. If you win, you've proved yourself right. Let others say what they want – what's that to you? He had barely claimed the rapid tiebreak of the World Championship match, ruthlessly deciding the issue by winning three games on the trot, when Magnus Carlsen could smile and speak again. Gone was the grim expression that had clouded his face at the press conferences, as the match got mired in a seemingly endless string of draws. No longer did he have to give in to his first impulse to answer questions with a curt 'no', 'I don't know' or 'I don't care'. As he walked in for the final press conference with his loose football player's gait, Magnus Carlsen was all smiles again, and when he sat down, he grinningly summed up his mood: 'I am very

The opening move for the first tiebreak game was made by Lucy Hawking, Chair of the Stephen Hawking Foundation, and daughter of the late theoretical physicist. In the middle chief arbiter Stéphane Escafre and World Chess CEO Ilya Merenzon.

happy. I felt I had a really good day at work today. Everything kind of went perfectly.'

Self-confidently he countered the criticism vented by many people, including predecessors Kasparov and Kramnik, that a great champion should have played on in Game 12, in which, uncharacteristically, he had suddenly proposed a draw in a position that still offered him slight chances, and opted to once again defend his title in a rapid and blitz tiebreak. 'Based on the information I had, I think that I made a very good decision. There were some things that I had missed during the game, which kind of made me underestimate my position at that point. But I still felt that, you know, with the mind-set that I had and everything, that I made the right decision. (...) Based on my chances today, I think it was correct.'

And with another broad grin he added, 'As for the opinions of Garry and Vlad, I mean, they're entitled to their stupid opinions,' eliciting supportive laughter from the room packed with VIPs and press representatives, even though many of them had been similarly puzzled and critical of his draw offer only 24 hours earlier.

The main issue that the World Champion had with his critics concerns the role of rapid play, and possibly blitz, in a contest for the classical World Championship. Traditionalists would like to see that championship decided in classical games – after all, we also have a separate World Championship in Rapid and Blitz – whereas Carlsen is less dogmatic. Remarkably, as he called Caruana his strongest opponent in world title matches so far, he also said that, based on recent results, the American had the same right to call himself the best player in the world in classical chess as he himself had. But he also asked for more flexibility regarding the faster time-controls. 'In general, more emphasis should be placed on rapid and blitz play in chess, because it gives you a larger margin to show that you're better than your opponent. I think it's not

With another broad grin he added, 'As for Garry and Vlad, they're entitled to their stupid opinions.'

unreasonable that it's part of a World Championship.'

From that perspective the Norwegian's decision to go for the tiebreak was certainly justified and his victory fully deserved. As Fabiano Caruana put it, gracious in defeat, 'I wasn't playing my best chess today and Magnus, I think, played very well.' Neither did he want to wallow in regret regarding the classical part, in which many felt he had left the better overall impression. 'I have some regrets about the classical portion, but I don't think I can be really upset about it. I maybe missed, like, two big chances. And Magnus had one completely winning position and one that was close to winning, so I can't really say that I missed more chances than Magnus overall. But it came down to today. I was hoping to play my best chess today, but I didn't even come close to that.'

Still, regarding Carlsen's plea for a more prominent role for faster chess in the World Championship, one might add a suggestive footnote

'It's not unreasonable that Rapid and Blitz are part of a World Championship.'

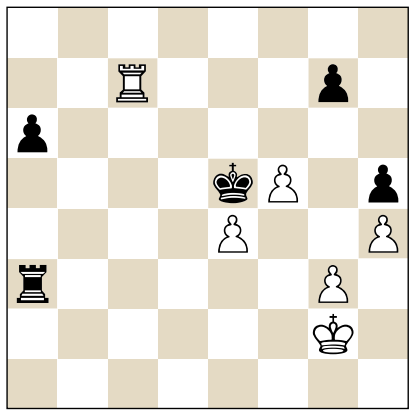
based on his approach to the final two classical games. When he made it clear that draws in Games 11 and 12 were fine with him, inevitably his reasoning before the final game against Sergey Karjakin, two years ago in New York, came to mind. As a rapid and blitz specialist, the champion had put his money on a form of chess that he excels in. At the same time, this choice was a kind of 'insurance'. It ensured that, even if he lost his title in the play-off, his rating would not be affected and he would in any case keep his number one position in the 'classical' world rankings!

'Three hours of terror'

At the outset of the tiebreak, two days after the final Game 12, the prevailing mood was one of caution. No one forgot to stress that, of course, Magnus Carlsen was the favourite, but particularly in the rapid games there was good reason not to underestimate Fabiano Caruana's chances, especially after his impressive play in most of the classical games. No one had really foreseen that, to quote the inimitable Alexander Grischuk, 'three weeks of boredom' would be followed by 'three hours of terror'.

In the first game, Caruana seemed to be defending successfully, when Carlsen, with masterly endgame play, broke the deadlock in the match (notes by Anish Giri).

Fabiano Carlsen
Magnus Caruana
London 2018 (tiebreak-1)



position after 37.♖c7

Black is a pawn down, but objctively speaking the position is a draw.

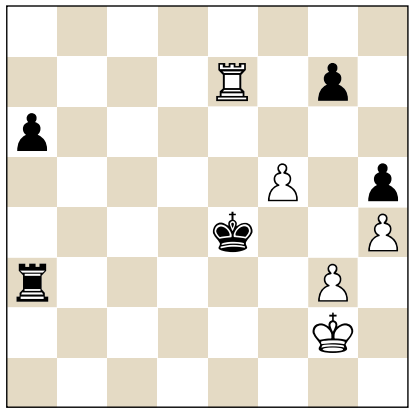
37...♔xe4?? Falling for a brilliant finesse. Mandatory was 37...♖a2+! 38.♔h3 ♔xe4 39.♖xg7, with two trivial defensive ideas: one to pick up the f5-pawn with the rook and the other to introduce mating ideas with ...♖a1 and ...♔f3, threatening ...♖h1 checkmate. 39...♖a1! (or 39...♖f2!) 40.♖c7, and this would force Black to go for the other defensive idea, 40...♖f1!, after all.

38.♖e7+!

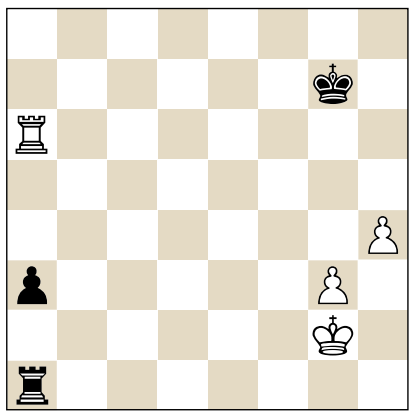
Very counterintuitive. White invites the black king to take a pawn and get closer to the weak h5-pawn. But in fact it is White who wins an important tempo.

OLE KRISTIAN STRØM

Fabiano Caruana arrives at the venue accompanied by his seconds Cristian Chirila and Rustam Kasimdzhanov.

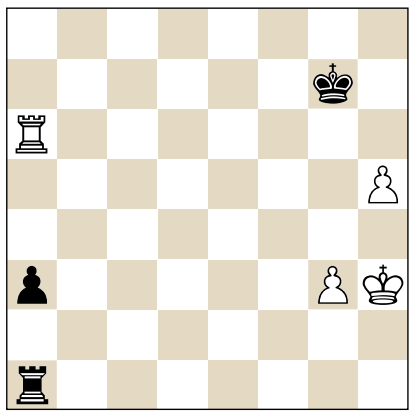


38...♔xf5 39.♖xg7 ♔f6 40.♖g5 a5 41.♖xh5 a4 42.♖a5 ♖a1 43.♔f3 a3 44.♖a6+ ♔g7 45.♔g2



45...♖a2+ It turns out that 45...a2 is not a draw, because White just pushes the pawns forward and keeps the king on g2/h2: 46.h5 ♔h7 47.g4 ♔g7 48.♔h2! ♔h7 49.g5, and it's important that after 49...♖c1 50.♖xa2 ♖c5 there is 51.♖g2!, so that the king had to be on h2 and not on g2.

46.♔h3 ♖a1 47.h5

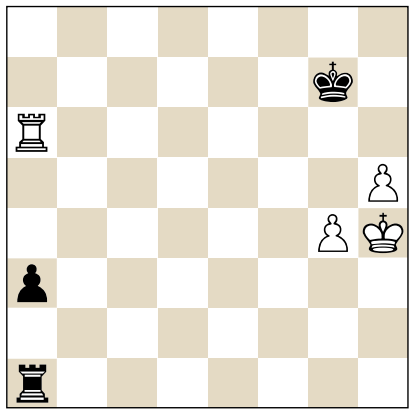


47...♔h7 47...a2 48.♔h2 would lead to the above line, and 48...♖e1, giving up the a-pawn immediately, won't save Black either: 49.♖xa2 ♔h6 50.♖a5, and White will eventually connect his pawns and win.

48.g4 ♔g7 49.♔h4!

OLE KRISTIAN STRØM

World Champion Magnus Carlsen arrives with two of the pillars of Team Carlsen, his father Henrik and his second Peter Heine Nielsen.



Now, with the pawn already on g4, the king can simply go forward.

49...a2 50.♔g5 ♔f7 51.h6 ♖b1 52.♖a7+ ♔g8 53.♖xa2 ♖b5+ 54.♔g6 ♖b6+ 55.♔h5

Black resigned.

Theoretically, nothing dramatic had happened yet, since in the best-of-four rapid match, Caruana had at least two games to fight back. But as it turned out, this first loss dealt a severe blow. In the second game, the American's self-confidence was undermined, while Carlsen, although he wasn't sure about his position, became very calm and played brilliantly.

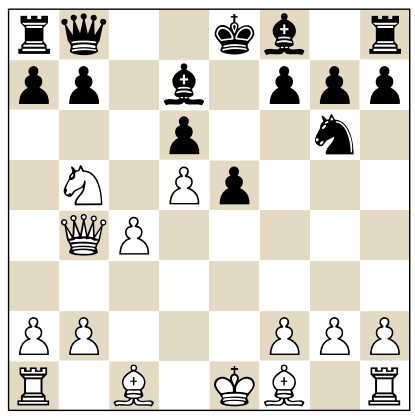
NOTES BY

Anish Giri

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
London 2018 (tiebreak-2)
Sicilian Defence, Sveshnikov Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♘d5 Once again back to the tabiya of this match, which had appeared in Games 8, 10 and 12.

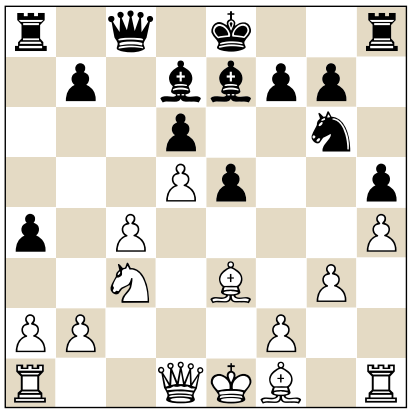
7...♘xd5 8.exd5 ♘e7 9.c4 ♘g6 10.♕a4 ♗d7 11.♕b4 ♕b8!?



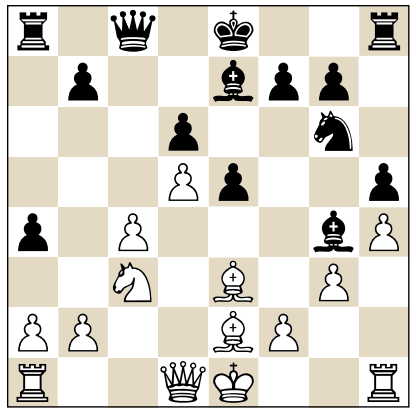
Deviating from Game 12, in which he went 11...♗f5.

12.h4 h5 13.♗e3 a6 14.♘c3 a5 14...♗e7 can be met by 15.♘a4, which explains the logic behind the ...a5-a4 idea.

15.♕b3 a4 16.♕d1 ♗e7 17.g3 ♕c8 So far, both players had been playing at the speed of light, or so it seemed from the transmission that I was following. Maybe there was some bluffing involved, since Black's position seemed highly suspect at this point.

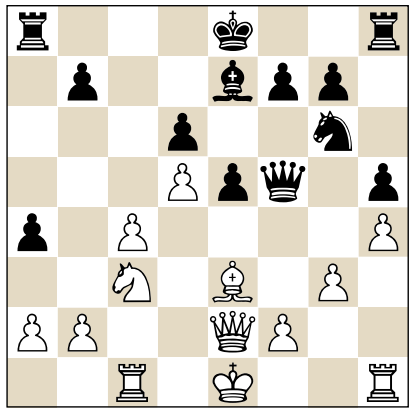


18.♗e2 ♗g4 18...0-0 is not good, since Black will find it hard to come up with a move after 19.♖c1, when 19...♗g4 20.♗xg4 hxg4 21.h5 forces 21...♘h8, because once Black has castled, there will no longer be a pin on the h-file.



19.♖c1 Not the worst of the options. It doesn't spoil much, but it certainly lets Black off the hook quite a bit.
19.♗xg4 felt principled: 19...hxg4 20.c5, with what feels like a powerful initiative after 20...dxc5 21.h5. Black has some issues with his knight and White wants to follow up with ♕e2 and 0-0-0, with a strong initiative.
19.f3 was also quite appropriate here, when it felt as if Caruana would have a better version of Game 12.

19...♗xe2 20.♕xe2 ♕f5



21.c5?!
This operation doesn't work well for White here, with no h4-h5 ideas after 0-0, as in the 19.♗xg4 lines.
21.0-0 0-0 would lead to an unclear position, but I am not sure about Black's queenside pawn structure.

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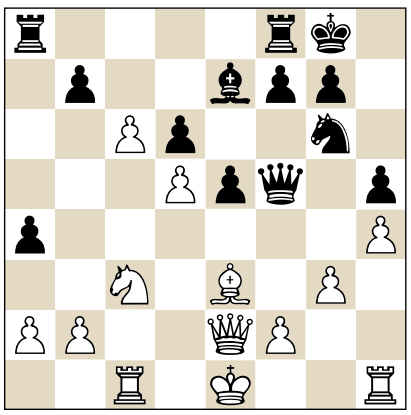
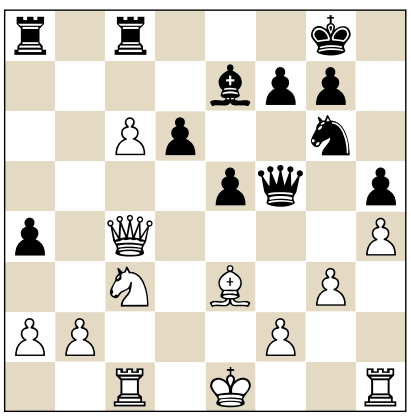
White can stick the knight on b5 and prepare the eventual c5 push. Black, in his turn, will have to show some creativity to get play on the kingside.

21...0-0 22.c6?!



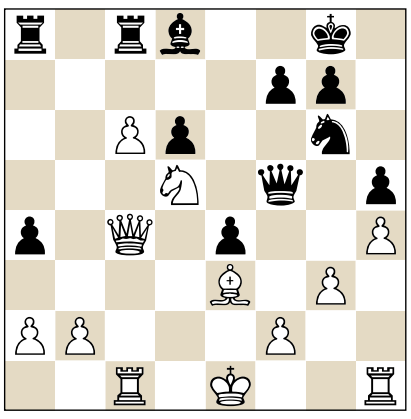
Very ambitious. But chess is a concrete game and in hindsight it is easy to explain why this isn't good. White is yet to castle and he remains a tempo short in many of the ensuing lines, and the weakness of the king on e1 will come back to haunt him.

22...bxc6 23.dxc6 ♖fc8 24.♕c4



24...♗d8 24...♕e6!?, fighting for the d5-square, also looks good for Black: 25.♘d5 ♖a5 26.♘b6 d5 27.♕c3 ♖b5 28.♕c2 ♗b4+ 29.♔e2 ♗c3!?, with complications favouring Black.

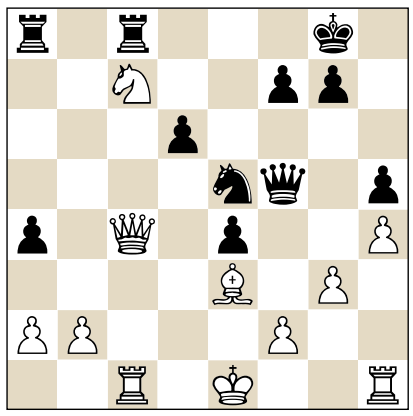
25.♘d5 e4



26.c7? White's position was extremely dangerous and on the verge of collapse, but this loses by force.

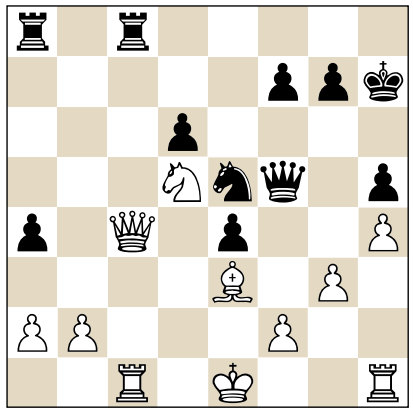
After 26.♗d4, despite having a few attractive options, Black doesn't have anything killing: 26...♖a5 (26...♕f3 27.0-0 ♘xh4 leads to a perpetual: 28.gxh4 ♕g4+ 29.♔h2 ♕xh4+; 26...♗a5+!? 27.♗c3 ♗xc3+ 28.♖xc3 ♖a5 29.♘e3, and White is completely in the game) 27.♘e3 ♕f3 28.0-0, and despite the fact that Black has options to sac both pieces on h4, White is holding, and, objectively, surviving.

26...♗xc7 27.♘xc7 ♘e5



28.♘d5 28.♕d5 loses to the very strong 28...♖ab8!, threatening ...♖xc7, followed by ...♘f3+ picking up the d5-queen, on top of some other threats, such as ...♘d3+, etc.

28...♔h7



Stepping out of the ♘e7 fork.

White is completely lost, since he will lose the full house to the potential ...♘d3 fork, so he resigned.

This was the definite lights-out for Caruana and the third game, which Carlsen also won, had in effect become a formality. The tiebreak had flashed by, and just like Karjakin two years ago, Caruana had not really stood a chance. Magnus Carlsen had defended his world title and could look back on his overall performance: 'Frankly speaking, the last couple of years my game hasn't been great. And in this sense, this match, the classical portion, was a step in the right direction. I think I played relatively well. (...) I feel I have things to work on, clearly, but I don't have any regrets. I never felt great about the first (classical) game, because if I had won that one, the match would have been very different. I felt that there weren't going to be a lot of chances. But in general I had a very decent performance in the classical, considering how I have been playing for a couple of years.'

'Frankly speaking, the last couple of years my game hasn't been great.

Indeed, the first game that Magnus Carlsen referred to seemed to herald a very different clash from the one we actually witnessed. You will find it annotated in the games section below, together with the other key games from the classical part. The defending champion, with the black pieces, looked inspired, not interested in equality but spoiling for an open confrontation with creative play. Before he could have warmed up, Caruana was on the ropes. However, as everyone sat staring at the engines' bleak evaluation of White's position, and waiting for the imminent knock-out, a small miracle happened. Carlsen failed to see the winning plan and, in a wondrous reversal of fortune, Caruana climbed back into the game and saved the draw.

His explosive start might not have brought the Norwegian a sensational

McFarland

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early lead, but it certainly contained a promise of a spectacular match with a considerable number of decisions. Or did it? As it was, the match calmed down and the players seemed to become more cautious. Carlsen got one more promising position in Game 9, and Caruana came close to winning in Game 6 and even more so in Game 8, but one way or another, despite a fair dose of high-class chess, one draw followed the other until there were a dozen and the classical part had finished in a 6-6 tie.

Favourite player

As draws became the trend, the press conferences lost their sparkle. With the tension mounting, the players became less talkative and their answers short and evasive. For days, the main issues that kept the journalists going were a short video from Caruana's camp in which a computer screen was visible with possible information about the openings he had been working on, and a band-aid on Carlsen's eyebrow after he had run into a Norwegian journalist while playing football on one of the free days. Was the video real or fake news? Caruana had no wish to comment. And did the injury over his eye bother Carlsen the next game? 'No.'

For more action and more elaborate answers, we would have to wait for the tiebreak. Perhaps the most memorable moment from the press conferences was when the two finalists were asked about their favourite players and Carlsen revealed that his favourite player was he himself, two or three years ago. A fascinating and revealing confession, but also one that invited someone to joke that, apparently, he has begun to identify himself with the Magnus App too much.

The College and beyond

The venue of the match was The College, a Victorian building in a central part of London that had been decorated with the World Chess house style of black and white logos and artwork. With a great variety of rooms – a café, a commentary room, a bar, a souvenir shop, a press room, a VIP room and, of course, a playing hall – it was a pleasant venue, but overall the rooms were quite small. The entrance fee, although not extravagant for London standards, was steep enough at 55 pounds per game, particularly since this didn't guarantee permanent access to the playing room. Because of the limited space, the spectators had to rotate and were given time slots. The organizers claimed there were 270 seats, which in itself would not be too impressive for a world title match, but anyone who actually counted the seats reached 200 at best.

But then, World Chess has never been very good at numbers. On the placards in The College, they repeated their claim that 600 million people worldwide play chess (the criterion seems to be that they have to play one game a year), which continues to feel like an unrealistic number. And in defence of the restricted space for spectators, World Chess CEO Ilya Merenzon explained that very few chess fans actually visit tournaments and matches these days, but that the London match was followed online by millions of enthusiasts around the globe.

Which begged the question on which platforms these millions actually watched the games. Certainly not on the official website, where the number of viewers rarely exceeded 3K. But then, they had to pay 20 dollars for the entire match there, while there was a wide choice of free platforms. On a side note, 20 dollars for the experience that World Chess promised was not a lot, with Judit Polgar as the main force on the commentary team and various camera angles to watch the players, but unfortunately the official website had lots of technical issues, and many of the comments in the live chat box on the main page were complaints. Sadly, the other comments in that chat box were no more inspiring. Right from the start, visitors had fun insulting the commentators and guests on the live broadcast and didn't refrain from spewing racist and sexist language. Some other visitors complained, but

OLE KRISTIAN STRØM

A happy and relieved Magnus Carlsen celebrates his victory with a glass of champagne. With an explosive 3-0 in the rapid tiebreak he felt he had silenced his critics.

for three weeks, essentially nothing was done to stop this practice.

So, if those millions were evidently not all watching on the official site, then where did they follow the games? Let's look at the main alternatives and the number of visitors that were watching during the crucial phase of an entertaining game of the match. These are not absolute numbers – merely a rough approximation of the overall number of viewers.

The live television programs of NRK in Norway seemed to attract the highest number with around 150,000 viewers, while the live broadcast online by newspaper VG drew some 50,000. The most popular specialist sites are Chess.com and Chess24. As Game 12 was getting exciting, 52K were watching at Chess.com (with an additional 4.5K on their non-English channels) and 46K on Chess24 (with an additional 20K on their Spanish and 8K on their German channels). At that same moment, ChessNetwork had 15K visitors, the Saint Louis Chess Club 8K, the most popular Turkish platform 4K and Chessbrah 3K. Add to this a couple of K for the Premium part (only in German) of ChessBase and a reasonable number for the Russian show with Sergey Shipov, and we can begin to add up the figures (including countless small channels on YouTube) – and conclude that 'millions' sounds less than convincing and that a considerable amount of creative calculation is required to come close to even half a million viewers.

'A considerable amount of creative calculation is required to come close to even half a million viewers.'

Fresh wind

No doubt, the new FIDE leadership will look at the veracity of the number of people World Chess claims to have reached, and at the way they staged this championship and have been running the cycle over the past few years. It is not unthinkable that FIDE will try to get out of the contract with World Chess and take control of the World Championship cycle once again, in the way that new FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich was quick to propose a restructuring of the Women's World Championship.

The prize-fund in London was a million euros, split 55-45 between winner and loser in view of the tiebreak. That's a lot of money, but also quite meagre compared to the amounts that the chess world championship used to raise not so very long ago.

The coming years will show whether a fresh wind is blowing in FIDE, and whether chess is ready for a revival, and how many people actually love the game. Magnus Carlsen remains a champion with a wide appeal, but as he stressed himself, he will have to work hard to regain the dominant position that he himself and the world expects from him. Fighting back used to be one of his greatest strengths, and now he may need it more than ever. He is still the best, and the number one in the world, but it is also telling that just as after the match against Karjakin, the Norwegian's image is slightly dented, while his challenger emerged from the match more popular than ever.

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NOTES BY
Jan Timman

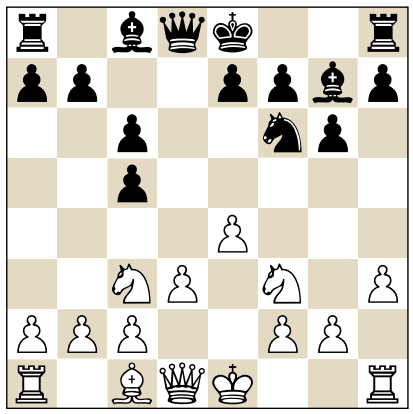
Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
London 2018 (1)
Sicilian Defence, Rossolimo Variation

1.e4 c5 A pleasant surprise. Carlsen is prepared to go for an open fight.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5

This could be expected. Caruana has a thing for the Rossolimo Variation, and he had played it before in a tournament game against Carlsen. This preference surprises me. I myself have often played it to avoid the substantial theory of the Sveshnikov, and there are more players who prefer a strategic battle to a theoretical one. But Caruana is known for his razor-sharp preparation. This would seem to make the Rossolimo Variation a less suitable option, since it requires many intuitive decisions – which is Carlsen's forte. Caruana repeated the Rossolimo in Games 3 and 5, before he went for 3.d4, allowing the Sveshnikov, from Game 8 onwards.

3...g6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.d3 ♗g7 6.h3 ♘f6 7.♘c3



7...♘d7

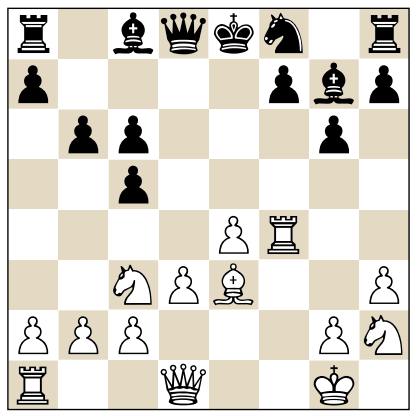
In Wijk aan Zee 2015, Carlsen played 7...b6 here against Caruana. After 8.♗e3 e5 9.0-0 0-0 10.a3 ♕e7, White went for the curious 11.♕b1 – a very unusual way to prepare the advance of the b-pawn. The play continued: 11...♘h5 12.b4, and now 12...cxb4 13.axb4 ♘f4 would have been very comfortable for Black. Carlsen, however, went for 12...f5, which is objectively worse because it allows White to capture on c5. He still managed to win, though.

8.♗e3 e5

In Caruana-Nakamura, St. Louis 2015, there followed 8...b6 9.♕d2 h6 10.0-0 e5 11.♘h2, and now Black decided to prevent the advance of the white f-pawn with 11...g5. This is slightly against the spirit of the position, and I think that Caruana would have liked to get this position again.

9.0-0 The usual move here is 9.♕d2 to prepare castling queenside. The move usually leads to a sharp battle with opposite castling. Caruana has always chosen to castle kingside, which leads to a quieter position. So the text probably didn't come as a surprise for Carlsen.

9...b6 10.♘h2 ♘f8 11.f4 exf4 12.♖xf4

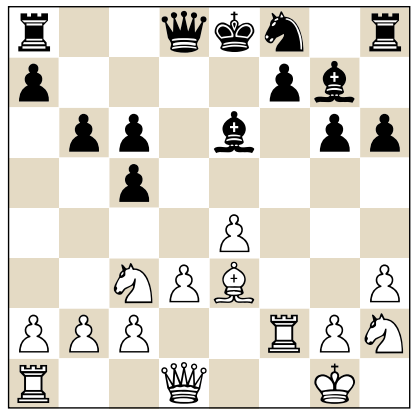


12...♗e6

In his commentaries for ChessBase, Duda observes: 'I thought he was going to play ...♘e6-d4 asap, but this is even nicer'. Carlsen may have had a concrete reason for not playing 12...♘e6. After 13.♖f2 ♘d4 14.♕d2 h6 15.♖af1 ♗e6 16.♘g4, it turns out that Black's knight manoeuvre may have cost too much time. But Black can overcome his problems with enterprising play: 16...f5! 17.♗xh6 ♗xh6 18.♘xh6 ♕h4, and White is forced to make an exchange sacrifice. The position after 19.exf5 gxf5 20.♘xf5 ♘xf5 21.♖xf5 ♗xf5 22.♖xf5 0-0-0 is roughly equal. Interestingly enough, White could have made a similar exchange sacrifice later in the game.

13.♖f2 h6

A strategic move, but a tad slow. With 13...♘d7 14.♘f3 ♘e5, Black could have equalized. After 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.♕d2 Black can choose where to castle. The position is roughly equal.

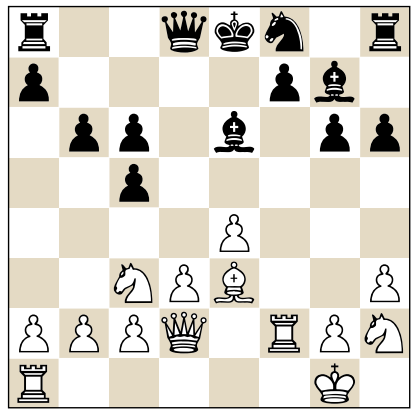


14.♕d2

An utterly normal developing move, but 14.♘f3 would have been stronger, the idea being to aim for d3-d4. It looks as if this would have yielded White the initiative. Black would now have two queen moves to prepare for castling queenside:

– 14...♕c7 15.d4 cxd4 16.♗xd4 0-0-0 (16...f6 can be met strongly by 17.♕e2, with a strategic plus) 17.♘d5! cxd5 18.♗xg7 dxe4 19.♕e1 ♖h7 20.♗e5, and White is better.

– 14...♕e7 15.d4 0-0-0 16.♖d2 ♘d7 17.a4 of 17.♕e2, and White exerts pressure on his opponent's position.



14...g5!

Taking square f4 away from the bishop. White's minor pieces are virtually paralysed now.

15.♖af1 ♕d6

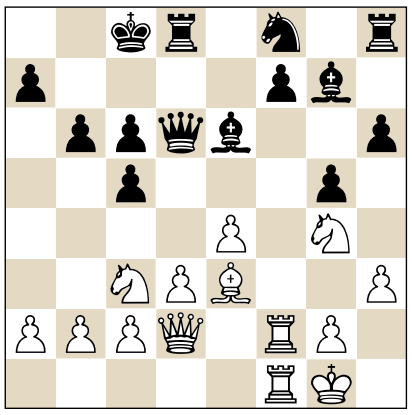
The point of the previous move. Black wants to castle queenside as quickly as possible. The obvious 15...♘g6

could have been met by 16.a4 ♕d6 17.a5. Now castling queenside is less attractive in view of the a-file being opened.

16.♘g4

Caruana used up oceans of time in this phase of the game. 16.a4 was still the best move, but there's nothing wrong with the text.

16...0-0-0

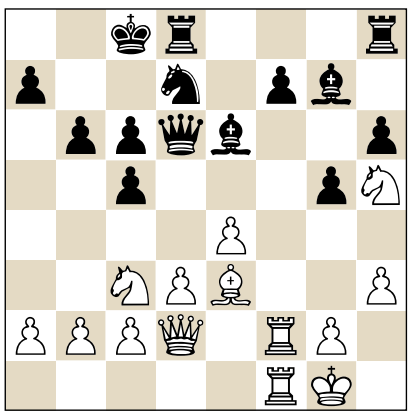


17.♘f6

But this is a shot in the dark. White should have made a positional sacrifice with 17.e5!, the point becoming clear after 17...♕c7 18.♘e4 ♗xe5 19.♘xe5 ♕xe5 20.♕e2 f5 21.♗d2!. White will put the bishop on the long diagonal to exert pressure on the dark squares. After 21...♖g8 22.♗c3 ♕c7 23.♘f6 ♖g6 24.♘g4, White has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

17...♘d7 A sobering reply. If White goes for the knight swap, Black will be in full control.

18.♘h5 Caruana must have played this with a heavy heart, because after Black's next move his knight will be completely dominated by the black king's bishop. But White had very little choice: he must try to keep the kingside closed.



18...♗e5 19.g4

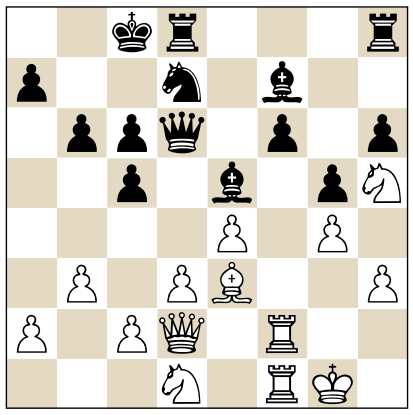
'Such moves were unthinkable some 60 years ago, but now they are standard,' Duda observes. But I would think that both Botvinnik and Smyslov, who fought their third World Championship match 60 years ago, would certainly have considered this.

It remains to be seen, however, if 19.a3, aiming for the advance of the b-pawn, would not have been stronger. A possible continuation would be: 19...g4 20.hxg4 ♗xg4 21.♘f4 ♖hg8 22.b4, and now Black has a choice:

– 22...♕e7 23.♘fe2 (23.b5 ♕h4 24.bxc6 ♘f6 is too dangerous for White) 23...♘f6 24.♗f4 ♗xe2! 25.♗xe5 ♕xe5 26.♘xe2 ♘g4 27.♕f4 ♕b2!, and Black is better. But things are far from crystal clear.

– 22...cxb4 23.axb4 ♕xb4 24.d4 ♘c5 25.♘fd5 cxd5 26.dxe5 dxe4 27.♕e1 ♘b7, also with advantage for Black, although White needn't despair here yet either.

19...f6 20.b3 ♗f7 21.♘d1

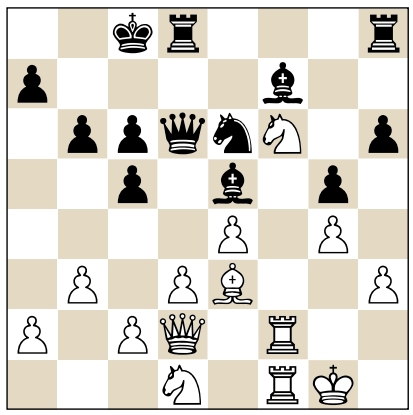


21...♘f8

An utterly unexpected and hard to fathom pawn sacrifice. Carlsen's play is often compared to that of Karpov, but sometimes there is a world of difference. Karpov would never have considered playing this, mainly because there are more conventional ways to increase the pressure on the white position.

A good move was 21...♖dg8, preparing the swap on h5. The play now assumes a forced character: 22.♕e2 ♕e6 23.♕f3 ♗xh5 24.gxh5 g4 25.hxg4 ♖xg4+ 26.♖g2 ♖hg8 27.♖xg4 ♖xg4+ 28.♔f2 ♖g3, and White will have to settle for an endgame a pawn down. After 29.♕f5 ♕xf5+ 30.exf5 ♖h3 Black has good winning chances.

22.♘xf6 ♘e6 This was the idea. The knight can now sally to d4 and f4, but it's nothing to write home about.



23.♘h5

Caruana had only 10 minutes left for his remaining moves here, so he goes for the most obvious knight move.

With the spectacular 23.♘d7 he could have equalized, as witness:

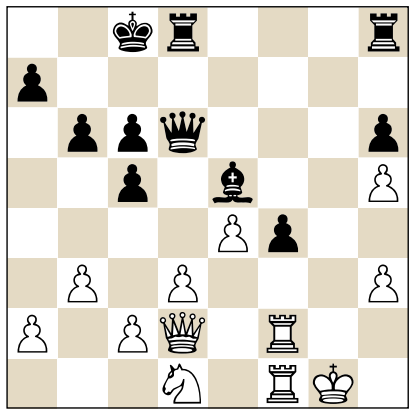
– 23...♖xd7 24.♖xf7 h5 25.gxh5 ♖xh5 26.♕g2 ♗f4 27.♖xd7 ♕xd7 28.♕g4.

– 23...♗f4 24.♘f6 ♗g3 25.♖f3 ♗g6 26.♕g2 of 26.♔g2, and Black hasn't achieved anything.

23...♗xh5 Played with a very concrete plan in mind.

The alternative was 23...♗g6, when the computer assesses the position as slightly better for Black. It seems to me, however, that Black will find it hard to make progress; there are no breaks.

24.gxh5 ♘f4 25.♗xf4 gxf4

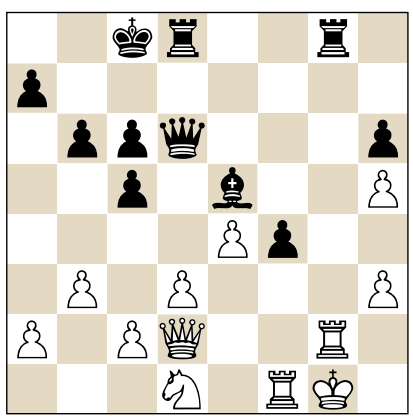


26.♖g2

Caruana had eight minutes left, and decided to go for this fairly quickly.

The exchange sacrifice 26.♖xf4 would have been practically very good, because it would leave a position with few surprises. Objectively, it would have qualified as well, since the position after 26...♗xf4 27.♕xf4 ♕xf4 (27...♕d4+ 28.♘e3) 28.♖xf4 ♖df8 29.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30.♔g2 ♖g8+ 31.♔h2 would be equal. Black cannot prevent the white knight from getting to the vital square f5.

26...♖hg8



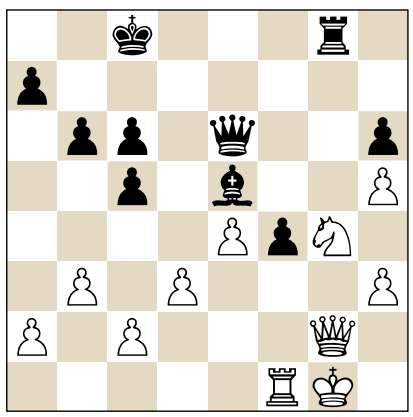
27.♕e2

This boils down to a wasted tempo. 27.♖f3 also had a downside in view of 27...♕d4+ 28.♔h1 ♕a1 29.♖f1 ♖xg2 30.♕xg2 ♕xa2, and Black is better.

With 27.♖g4! White could have maintained the balance: after 27...♖xg4+ 28.hxg4 ♖g8 29.♕g2 ♕d7 30.♘f2 ♗d4 31.♔h2 Black will have to swap on f2 in order to capture the white g-pawn.

27...♖xg2+ 28.♕xg2 ♕e6 29.♘f2 ♖g8 30.♘g4

It looks as if White has managed to throw up a blockade, but Black will be able to crash through it.

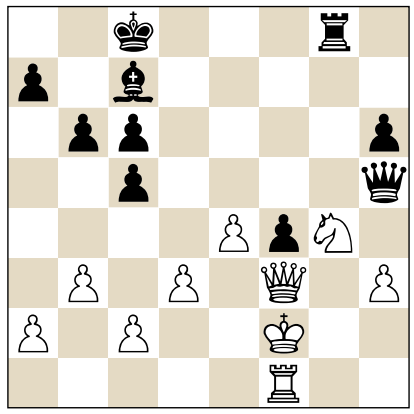


NEW IN CHESS

Centrally located, The College, a Victorian building on Southampton Road, was a pleasant venue for the match.

30...♕e8 Cutting to the chase. Once Black has captured on h5, the white knight will no longer have a foothold.

31.♕f3 ♕xh5 32.♔f2 ♗c7



33.♔e2

The second time in the game that White had the advance 33.e5!?, his only hope of counterplay. After 33...♔b7 34.♘f6 ♕h4+ 35.♔e2 Black must choose a square for his rook:

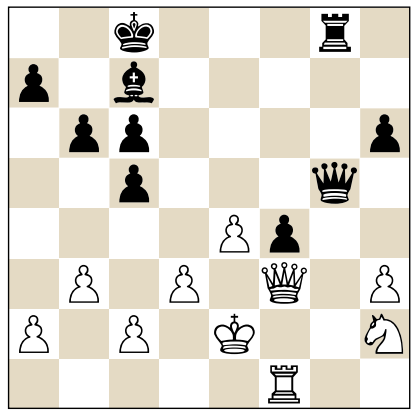
– 35...♖g3 36.♕xf4 ♕xf4 37.♖xf4 ♗xe5 38.♖f5 ♗xf6 39.♖xf6 ♖xh3 40.♖f7+, and the rook ending is tenable.

– 35...♖g7! 36.♕xf4 ♕xh3 37.a4 ♖e7, and by winning the e-pawn, Black will retain winning chances.

33...♕g5!

Now Black takes full control of the position. The white knight will have to beat a hasty retreat.

34.♘h2



34...h5

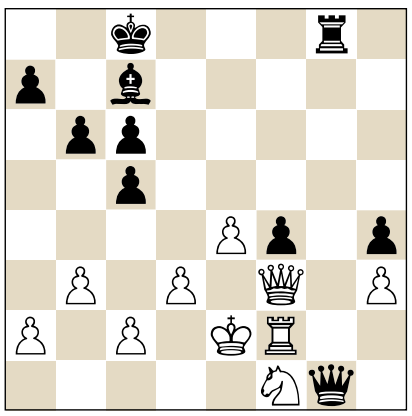
Carlsen still had 18 minutes here, whereas Caruana had had to fall back on his extra time. There didn't seem to be any doubt about Black's victory, especially because the win is not very complicated.

Devastating was 34...♕e5, when Black on the one hand threatens to penetrate with his rook on g3 and on the other has his queen poised to penetrate the queenside. White

is utterly powerless against these threats. Carlsen misses this obvious chance and starts playing hesitantly, possibly made nervous by Caruana's time-trouble.

35.♖f2 ♕g1 36.♘f1 h4

An uncharacteristic move for Carlsen in that he lets go of some of his grip on the position. Winning was 36...♕g7, in order for the queen to penetrate the queenside after all.



37.♔d2

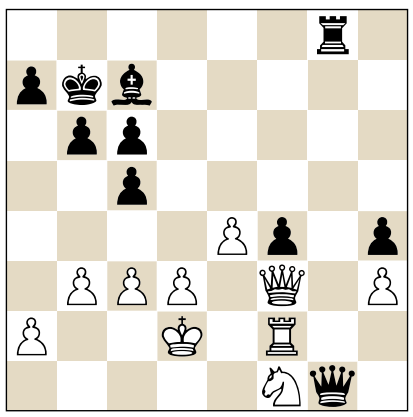
The third moment to advance the e-pawn. Absolutely necessary was 37.e5!, again exploiting the fact that the black c6-pawn is unprotected. This would leave Black with a reduced advantage, e.g. 37...♖g5 38.♔d2 ♔b7 39.♕xf4 ♗xe5 40.♕f7+ ♗c7 41.a4, and White is holding on.

37...♔b7

Now Black is back in control.

38.c3

Weakening the queenside; but after 38.a4 ♗e5 White would also have been left with a hopeless defence.

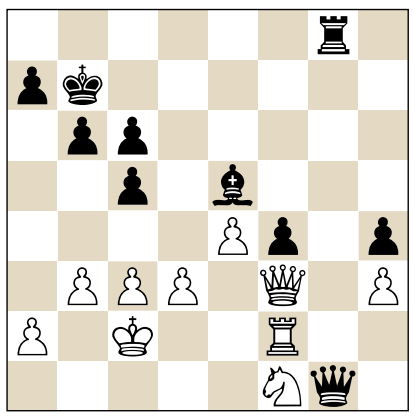


38...♗e5

Carlsen still had seven minutes here, five of which he used for the text.

It is strange that he did not strike with the devastating exchange sacrifice 38...♖g3!, since he had prepared this assault with his 36th move. The winning line is not difficult: after 39.♘xg3 hxg3 40.♖g2 ♕b1 41.d4 ♕xa2+ the white position collapses. The text also leaves Black with a winning position, but now he will have to work for it.

39.♔c2



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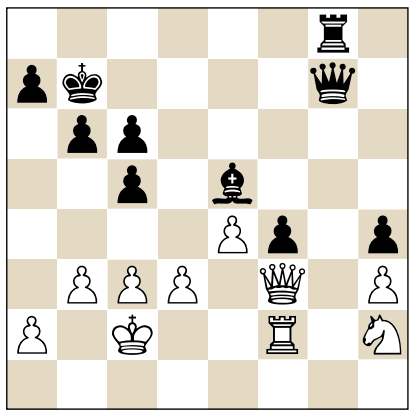
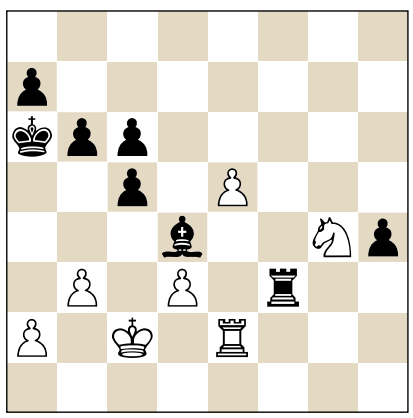
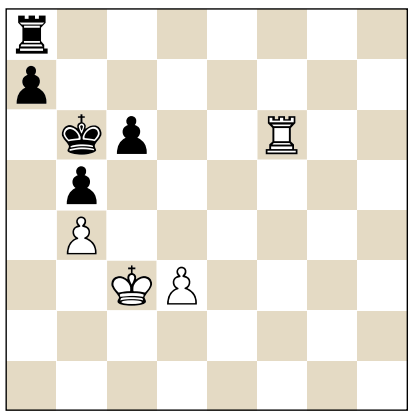
39...♕g7
Now the exchange sacrifice was no longer dangerous for White. After 39...♖g3 40.♘xg3 hxg3 41.♖d2 ♕a1, he has the saving move 42.d4!.
But with 39...b5 Black could have secured the game, since 40.a4 a6 would leave White in zugzwang. If he plays his rook, the black queen's road to the queenside will be opened again: 41.♖d2 b4 42.cxb4 ♕d4, and the white position collapses.
40.♘h2



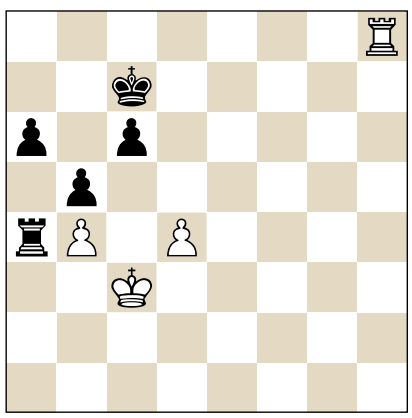
40...♗xc3
And here, Carlsen allows the win to irretrievably slip through his fingers. With 40...♕g1 41.♘f1 b5 he could still have secured victory.
41.♕xf4
Caruana must have heaved a silent sigh of relief when playing this move, having not only survived his time-trouble but also his positional problems. Black will be unable to avoid the queen swap, which will take the sting out of the position.
41...♗d4 42.♕f7+ ♔a6 43.♕xg7 ♖xg7 44.♖e2
Of course – the rook is placed behind the passed pawn.
44...♖g3 45.♘g4 ♖xh3 46.e5 ♖f3



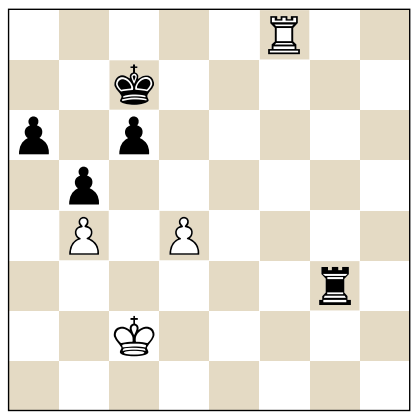
Black has won a pawn, and the rook must hurry back to stop the white e-pawn. He will be unable, however, to prevent his h-pawn being swapped for the white e-pawn, leaving only pawns on the queenside.
47.e6 ♖f8 48.e7 ♖e8 49.♘h6 h3 50.♘f5 ♗f6 51.a3 b5
Black might have tried 51...♔a5 to stop the march of the b-pawn, after which White's most convincing drawing attempt would be 52.♖h2 ♗xe7 53.♖xh3 ♗f6 54.♖h6 ♖f8 55.♘d6 ♗d4 56.♘c4+. The knight is pretty strong.
52.b4 cxb4 53.axb4 ♗xe7 54.♘xe7 h2 55.♖xh2 ♖xe7 56.♖h6 ♔b6 57.♔c3 ♖d7 58.♖g6 ♔c7 59.♖h6 ♖d6 60.♖h8 ♖g6 61.♖a8 ♔b7 62.♖h8 ♖g5 63.♖h7+ ♔b6 64.♖h6 ♖g1 65.♔c2 ♖f1 66.♖g6 ♖h1 67.♖f6 ♖h8 68.♔c3 ♖a8



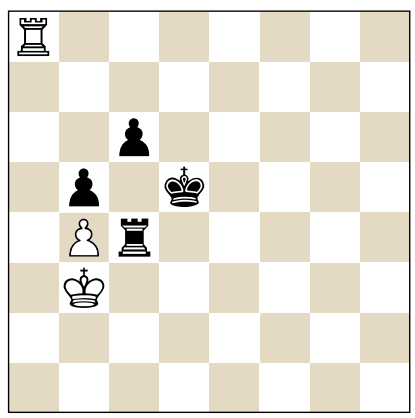
69.d4
The simplest way. White prevents the advance of the black a-pawn because of the threat d5.
69...♖d8 70.♖h6 ♖d7 71.♖g6 ♔c7 72.♖g5 ♖d6 73.♖g8 ♖h6 74.♖a8 ♖h3+ 75.♔c2 ♖a3 76.♔b2 ♖a4 77.♔c3 a6 78.♖h8



78...♖a3+
After 78...a5, White draws at once with 79.bxa5 ♖xa5 80.d5 c5 81.♖h6. Black's rook is too poorly positioned for him to harbour any hopes of winning.
79.♔b2 ♖g3 80.♔c2 ♖g5 81.♖h6 ♖d5 82.♔c3 ♖d6 83.♖h8 ♖g6 84.♔c2 ♔b7 85.♔c3 ♖g3+ 86.♔c2 ♖g1 87.♖h5 ♖g2+ 88.♔c3 ♖g3+ 89.♔c2 ♖g4 90.♔c3 ♔b6 91.♖h6 ♖g5 92.♖f6 ♖h5 93.♖g6 ♖h3+ 94.♔c2 ♖h5 95.♔c3 ♖d5 96.♖h6 ♔c7 97.♖h7+ ♖d7 98.♖h5 ♖d6 99.♖h8 ♖g6 100.♖f8 ♖g3+ 101.♔c2



101...♖a3
Carlsen keeps trying, but it's a wasted effort.
102.♖f7+ ♔d6 103.♖a7 ♔d5 104.♔b2 ♖d3 105.♖xa6 ♖xd4 106.♔b3 ♖e4 107.♔c3 ♖c4+ 108.♔b3 ♔d4 109.♖b6 ♔d3 110.♖a6 ♖c2 111.♖b6 ♖c3+ 112.♔b2 ♖c4 113.♔b3 ♔d4 114.♖a6 ♔d5 115.♖a8

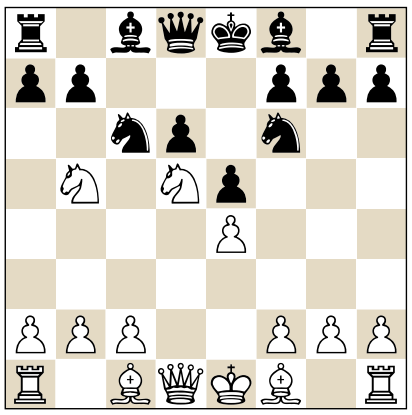


And a draw was agreed.

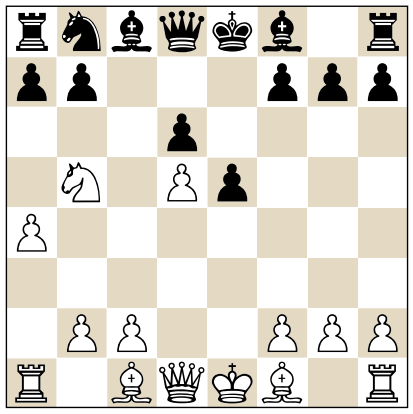
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
London 2018 (8)
Sicilian Defence, Sveshnikov Variation

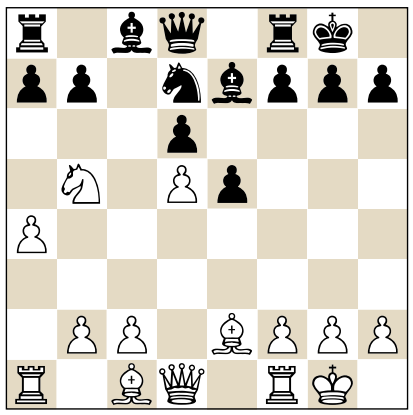
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4
The Rossolimo (3.♗b5) is obviously incredibly testing as well, but after going for it three times rather unsuccessfully, it wasn't a shocker that Caruana would try something else.
3...cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5
As expected, Magnus is going for the well-established and highly respected Sicilian Sveshnikov Variation (aka the Chelyabinsk Variation).
6.♘db5 d6 7.♘d5!?



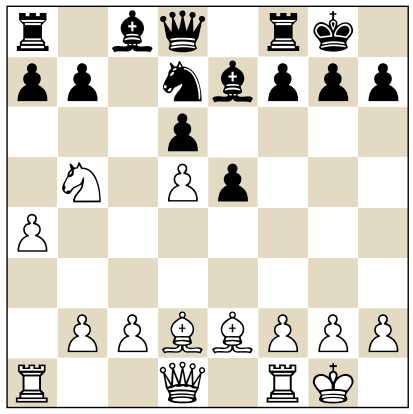
Not the main move, but not a complete revelation either. This line has become trendy thanks to the efforts of the young theoreticians Niclas Huschenbeth from Germany and the Russian Grigoriy Oparin. It caught the spotlight recently, when Vladimir Kramnik made it a weapon of choice against Roganovic at the Batumi Olympiad.
7...♘xd5 8.exd5 ♘b8
8...♘e7 is what Roganovic played against Kramnik. There followed 9.c4 ♘g6 10.♕a4 ♗d7 11.♕b4! ♗f5 12.h4 a6 13.h5 ♘f4 14.♘c3 ♗e7 15.♗e3 ♘d3+ 16.♗xd3 ♗xd3 17.h6, with the initiative, which eventually, after some complications and a final blunder by his opponent, yielded Kramnik the full point (Kramnik-Roganovic, Batumi 2018, 1-0, 45).
9.a4



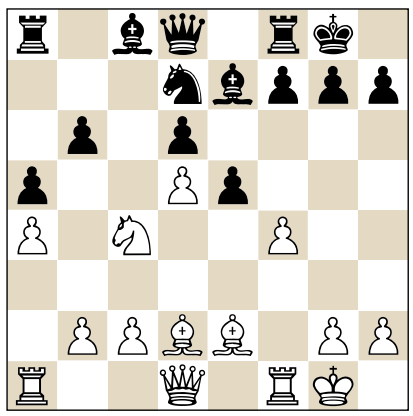
The modern treatment. 9.c4 is the more traditional approach, but nowadays the c4-square is often used for the knight here, from where it eyes some critical squares, to wit b6, d6 and e5.
9...♗e7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7
Thus far the natural moves leading up to this tabiya. Now White has a wide choice of options and approaches.



12.♗d2
The point of this modest move is to strengthen the a4-a5 advance. Now that the a5-pawn will be protected, White will be able to withdraw the knight to a3 after ...a7-a6. We are still on relatively familiar ground, since Grigoriy Oparin played this twice against Boris Gelfand.
12.♔h1 was played in the first game that made me take this line seriously: Nakamura-Gelfand, played all the way back in 2012. That game continued 12...f5 13.f4 a6 14.♘a3 exf4 15.♗xf4 ♘e5 16.♕d2 ♗d7 17.♕b4 ♖b8, and it was at this point that Hikaru made a serious positional mistake with 18.c4?, going on to lose a positional masterpiece (Nakamura-Gelfand, London 2012, 0-1, 58).
Perhaps 12.a5 is the most logical move, but the problem is that after 12...a6 White's knight cannot reach the desired c4-square and has to go back 13.♘c3, with a very unclear position, that Baadur Jobava tried twice against his good friend Ivan Salgado.



12...f5
Magnus chooses his own way. It is hard to speculate to what extent he had prepared for this, but since he was taking his time and eventually failed to solve his opening problems, this line was clearly not one of his priorities.
12...♘f6 was Gelfand's first reaction: 13.♗e3 a6 14.♘a3 ♖b8 15.b4, and Black was probably not satisfied with the outcome of the opening (Oparin-Gelfand, Moscow 2017, ½-½, 40).
In the second game, played a few days later in the same tournament, Boris deviated with a positional concept often seen in similar structures of the Najdorf: 12...a6 13.♘a3 a5!? 14.♘c4 b6 15.f4

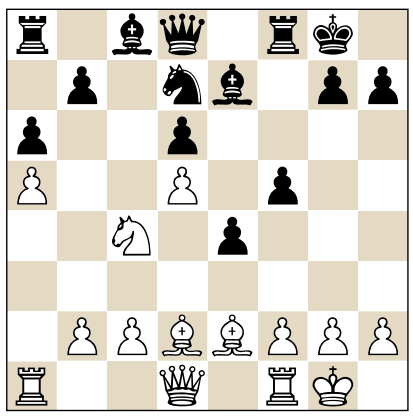


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and here the position is very unclear and Black has quite some options. Perhaps the game move was not

the best option: 15...♗a6?! 16.♘e3!, and White should be happy offering this bishop trade, although many more things happened before White eventually won (Oparin-Gelfand, Moscow 2017, 1-0, 53).

13.a5 a6 14.♘a3 e4 15.♘c4

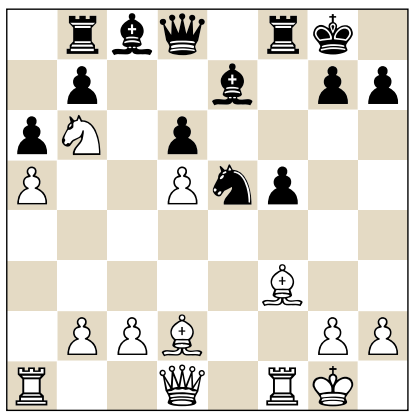


15...♘e5 Black kind of abandons his queenside, but in return gets a beautiful knight on e5 and some potential for a kingside initiative. But it is too early to wax lyrical, since Fabi was still in book and the play is extremely concrete.

16.♘b6 ♖b8 17.f4

Sooner or later White has to pay attention to what Black is doing on the kingside, and this break will eventually be necessary.

17...exf3 18.♗xf3 Another critical position. Despite looking completely fresh and uncharted, it had actually occurred in a couple of correspondence and computer games. Black's queenside is cramped, but his main issue is the c8-bishop, which lacks attractive squares. Tempting, therefore, is 18...f4, preparing ...♗f5.

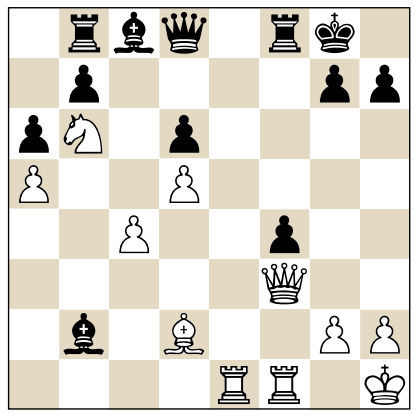


18...g5? Structurally speaking, this is not such a bad move, since Black wants to push on the side where he's got a pawn majority, but it seems unnecessary. Both 18...♗f6 and 18...f4 would have been more advisable, and only then should Black decide whether to push ...g5 or perhaps abandon the idea altogether.

18...♗g5 is a tempting try to gain even more control of the dark squares, but it seems too slow: 19.c4 ♗xd2 20.♕xd2 f4 21.c5, and White just crashes through on the queenside or in the centre before Black has time to come up with any kind of counterplay.

18...♗f6 is a decent preparatory move, when 19.c3 looks natural, and now 19...g5 already seems more appropriate, although after 20.g3! it will still not be easy to find a clear follow-up. Perhaps some sophisticated manoeuvring like ...♕c7-♕g7 or ...♗d7-♗e8 is called for, with an unclear position, at least in practical terms.

18...f4!? is my favourite, and not only because it was recommended by my wife on air during her commentary with Peter Svidler: 19.c4!? (after 19.♖a4 the game push 19...g5 seems a lot more attractive. I even speculated on Twitter that this was the move in Magnus' file, but I am probably just imagining things as usual). Now 19...g5 would transpose to the game, but Black has a better option: 19...♗f6 20.♔h1 ♘xf3 21.♕xf3 ♗xb2 22.♖ae1



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and White has tremendous compensation for the pawn, since the f4-pawn is likely to fall and Black has to continuously watch out for the c4-c5 break. Still, with perfect play Black may hold this one.

19.c4 f4 20.♗c3!

This is important. Just as Black plays ...♗f5, he gets hit with the thematic c4-c5 break.

OLE KRISTIAN STRØM

That's what you get when you collide with a Norwegian journalist during a football game on the free day. After Game 9, Magnus Carlsen was asked if the injury had bothered him. 'No.'

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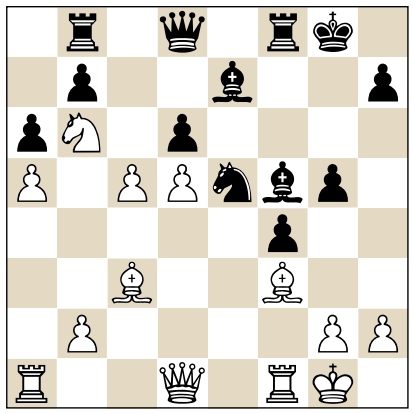
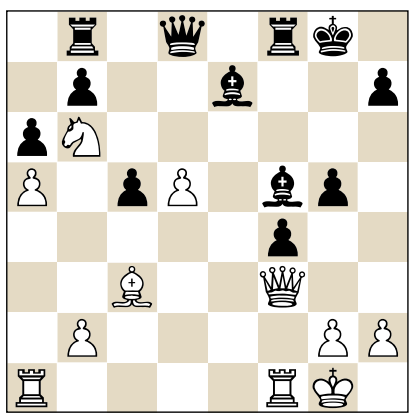
20...♗f5 21.c5!



21...♘xf3+ 22.♕xf3 dxc5

Black is a pawn up, but that's really all he can be happy about. In fact, when you delve into the position, it becomes apparent that White's advantage is simply huge. The d5 passer is very strong and in the long run, with the kingside pawns overextended and the mighty c3-bishop unopposed, Black's king will be unable to find safety. In fact, Black's only chance to survive this is to either scare White with some ...g4/f3/g3 push or coordinate his pieces by switching his queen to g6.



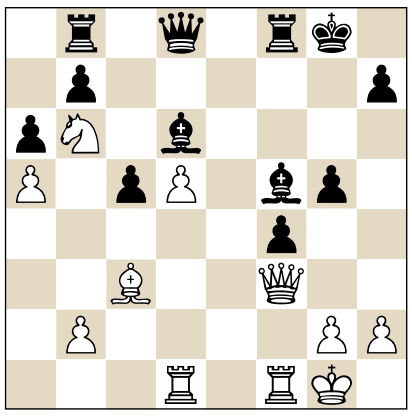
23.♖ad1

A fine move, but there were some very powerful alternatives as well.

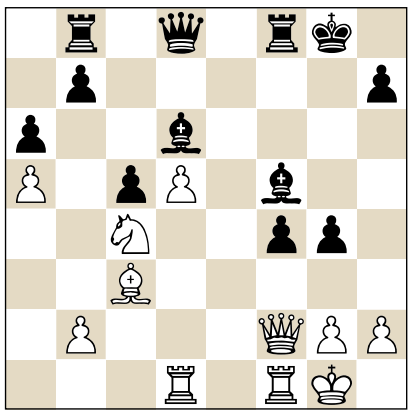
23.g4!? is the roughest solution: 23...♗g6 24.♖ad1 ♗d6 25.♖fe1, and with the inclusion of g4 and ...♗g6, White not only took out the ...g5-g4 threat but also secured the e6-square for his rook.

23.♖ae1 is a very strong move, too: 23...♗f6 24.h4! h6 25.hxg5 hxg5 26.g4!. Once again, this is the puncher. Depending on where the bishop will go, ♖e6 or d6 will decide.

23...♗d6 One of the key positions of the match. Here Fabiano must have forgotten that apart from ...g5-g4, there is also the positional threat of ...♕e8-♕g6, connecting the rooks and securing the king all at once.



24.h3? Quite incredible, but this actually gives it all away in just one move. 24.♘c4 g4 25.♕f2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

is indeed a little murky, but in fact White is winning objectively:

– 25...f3 26.♖fe1!. It looks a bit unclear, but Black really has no way to exploit his advanced kingside pawns. On the contrary, Black has weaknesses everywhere and is lost here.

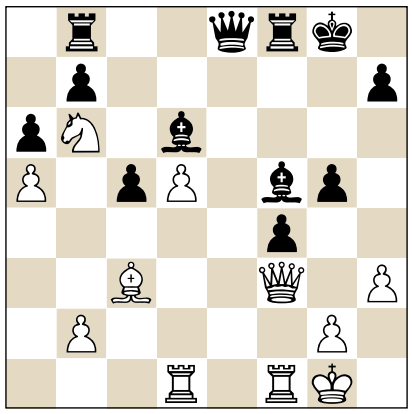
– 25...g3 26.♕d2! ♕h4 (26...gxh2+ 27.♔h1! is the well-known idea of hiding behind your opponent's pawn) 27.h3. There is really nothing for Black here, since 27...♗xh3 28.gxh3 simply doesn't work: 28...♕xh3 29.♘xd6 f3 30.♕g5, mate.

A pretty clean solution was 24.♕h5!, which is quite doable. That said, when the world is watching and the pressure mounts, things can go wrong:

– 24...♗g6 25.♕h3! ♗f5, and this can be met by the, by now, thematic 26.g4!.

– 24...♕e8 is objectively the toughest defence, but obviously not enough to scare anyone away from playing ♕h5: 25.♕xg5+ ♕g6 26.♕xg6+ hxg6 27.♘c4 ♖bd8 28.♘xd6 ♖xd6 29.♗e5 ♖d7 30.♖xf4. Compared to the game, Black is a couple pawns down and thus pretty much lost.

24...♕e8!

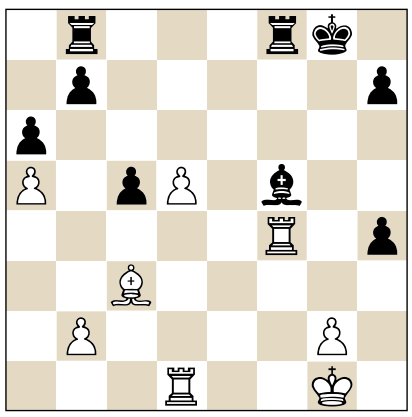


Now it turns out that once the queen reaches g6, Black has suddenly solved all his problems. The b8-rook will find its ideal spot on e8, so White is forced to initiate a simplifying sequence.

25.♘c4 ♕g6 26.♘xd6 ♕xd6

White is too late to set up a deadly battery along the a1-h8 diagonal, since b3, ♗b2 and ♕c3 are not going to happen due to ...♖e8-♖e3. Fabiano found nothing better than to simplify further, and it does seem that there is no longer anything to play for.

27.h4 gxh4 28.♕xf4 ♕xf4 29.♖xf4

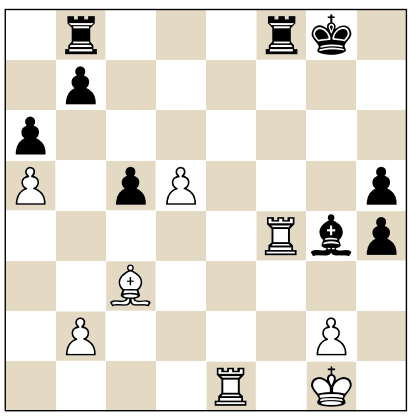


White would retain some slight pressure due to his passed d-pawn and the weak black king, except for Black's accurate reply:

29...h5!

29...h3 would probably also do it, but this elegant push, preparing ...♗g4, secures the much desired draw.

30.♖e1 ♗g4

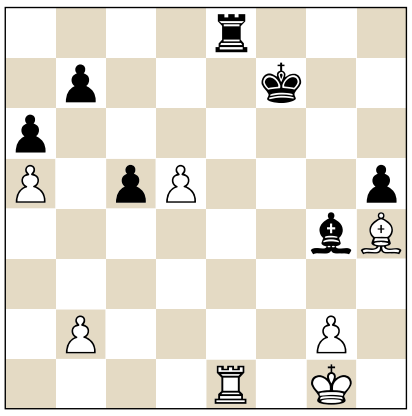


The bishop does an important job of both blocking the g-file and controlling the key d7-square.

31.♖f6

Sophisticated, but not enough to pose real problems.

31...♖xf6 32.♗xf6 ♔f7 33.♗xh4 ♖e8



The computer gets a little excited here due to the prospects of winning the c5-pawn in the bishop ending, but as any human player slightly familiar with opposite-coloured bishop endgames knows, it is a dead draw.

34.♖f1+

Or 34.♖c1 ♔g6 35.♖xc5 ♖c8, with an easy draw. One passer is never enough, since it can easily be blocked.

34...♔g8 35.♖f6 ♖e2 36.♖g6+ ♔f8 37.d6 ♖d2 38.♖g5

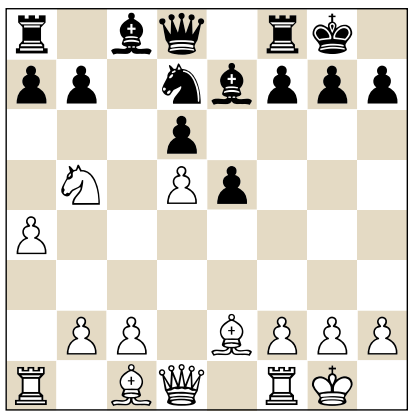
Draw.

A major miss by the Challenger, despite great preparation and impressive power play in the early middle game.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

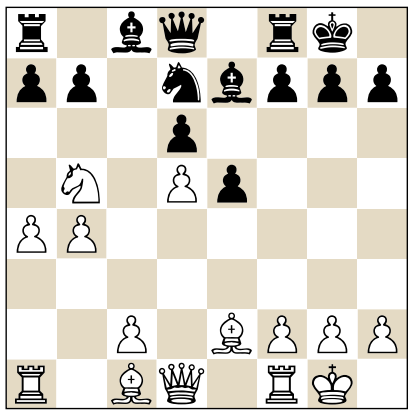
Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
London 2018 (10)
Sicilian Defence, Sveshnikov Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♘d5 ♘xd5 8.exd5 ♘b8 9.a4 ♗e7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7



Up to here, the game has followed the same course as Game 8. Commentating this live, I was sceptical about Caruana's approach of repeating the same opening variation, as I felt that in modern times, with access to a team of great seconds with powerful computers, it shouldn't take too long to solve pretty much any opening issue. What neither Magnus nor I had seen coming was that Fabiano would come up with a new move as early as move 12.

12.b4!?

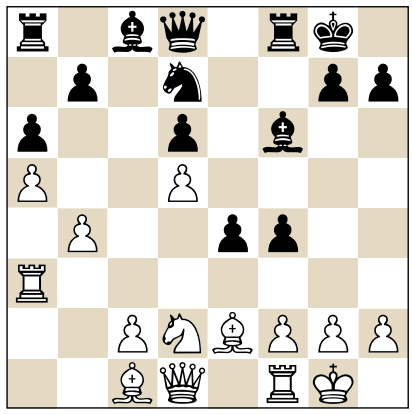


This is a rare case of a new idea actually literally being new. As far as I could see, it hasn't been played in any(!) over-the-board game and has never featured in correspondence practice. This is quite surprising, since this move looks just as logical as 12.♗d2, which Fabi played in the previous game. The idea is once again to enable White to withdraw the knight to a3, once White goes a4-a5 and Black meets it with ...a7-a6.

12...a6

The most logical move. In fact, ...a6, followed by ...a5, was the first idea that came into my head as well.

12...f5 13.a5 a6 14.♘a3 felt like a worse version of the previous game, as you would expect b2-b4 to be more universal than ♗c1-d2. In fact, it is not that straightforward. A sample line could be: 14...e4 15.♘c4 f4!? 16.♘d2 (after 16.♖a3 ♘e5, for example, the b4-pawn will be hanging after 17.♘xe5 dxe5, and after the natural 18.♖b3 Black can initiate some play on the kingside, starting with, for example, 18...♗h4, hinting at some ...f3 gxf3 ♗h3 ideas and keeping the ...♖f6 lift as an option as well) 16...♗f6 17.♖a3!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

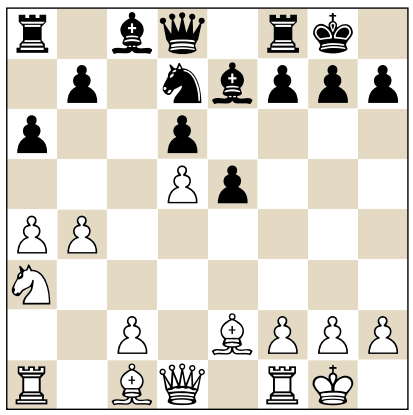
This rook lift, which Fabiano probably encountered in his preparation, eventually got into his DNA, as we will see later. 17...♕e7 18.♗g4 ♘e5 19.♗xc8 ♖axc8 20.♘xe4 f3 21.♖e1 fxg2, and Black has some play here, but White, still half a pawn up, remains in control.

12...a5 feels less good without including ...a6, but made some sense as well.

12...b6 is another idea, toying with the move order. The ensuing positions are highly complex, as pretty much all positions in this variation:

13.a5 a6 14.axb6 ♘xb6, and the more natural 15.♘a3 can be met by the original 15...a5!?, trying to take the sting out of White's queenside play.

13.♘a3



13...a5?!

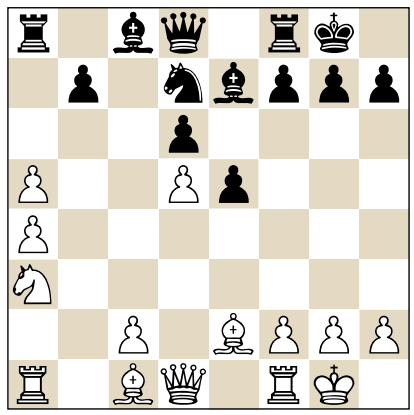
This is probably already slightly inaccurate. Black suddenly finds himself walking down a narrow road, and I am not sure that he will be too happy with what he will see at the end of it.

13...b6!? was an alternative to 13... a5 that would preserve more tension in the position: 14.♘c4 f5 (14...a5 won't give Black an easy life either, since after 15.bxa5 bxa5 16.♗d2, he will have to take care of his weak a5-pawn) 15.f4. This is a way to keep both sides of the board in check, but here Black also has quite some options. He can choose to challenge the queenside structure with ...a5 or do something more cautious. ...♗b7/...♖c8 comes to mind, trying to finish his development, for what it's worth. Here, too, one of White's main ideas is the ♖a3-rook lift.

15.a5 b5 is pretty desperate for Black, but less clear. White will dominate the queenside after tearing apart Black's pawn structure with c4, but Black will in turn organize some quick initiative with ...e4 and ...f4.

14.bxa5!

14.c3 is what I had assumed was White's idea: keeping control of the c5-square. Fabiano and his seconds and their computers, however, had a more concrete and stronger approach to this position.



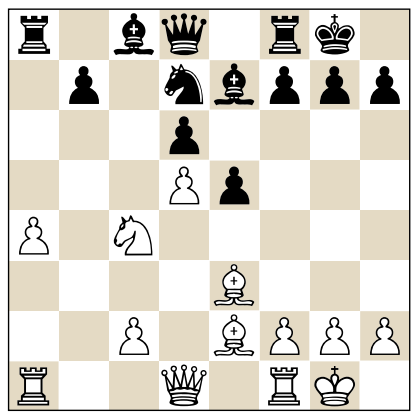
14...♖xa5

14...♕xa5 would have transposed to the game. The extra option of ...♕c7 is surprisingly unfortunate: 15.♘c4 ♕c7 (15...♕d8!) 16.a5 f5 (16...b5 can now be met by a nice tactic: 17.♘b6!) 17.♗e3 f4 18.♗b6, and this would be a worse version of the game for Black, since he would not have the option of ...♕e8.

15.♘c4 ♖a8

Other squares are obviously not attractive.

16.♗e3!



16...f5

I was sceptical about allowing a5/♗b6, while following the game without a computer, but that was before I realized that 16...b6 can be met by 17.♖b1!.

After 16...b6 17.♖b1! ♖xa4 18.♘xb6,

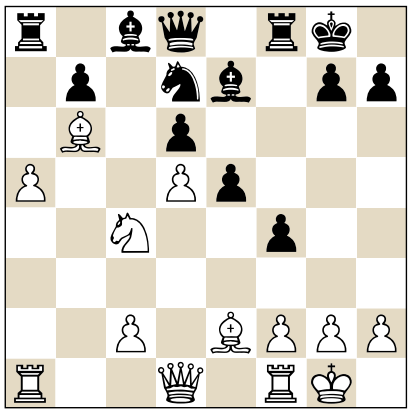
MARIA EMELIANOVA

At the final press conference Magnus Carlsen was all smiles again. Fabiano Caruana was gracious in defeat, but could not hide his deep disappointment with his poor performance in the tiebreak.

'What neither Magnus nor I had seen coming was that Fabiano would come up with a new move as early as move 12.'

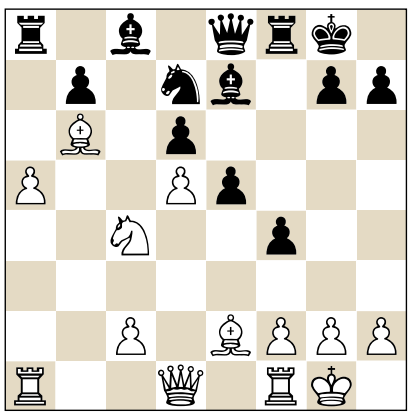
Black has no structural problems, but he has the very serious issue of having no safe square for his rook.

17.a5 f4 18.♗b6



18...♕e8!

18...♘xb6 19.♘xb6 ♖b8 20.♗g4 is a positional disaster. White's knight is far superior to the bad e7-bishop.



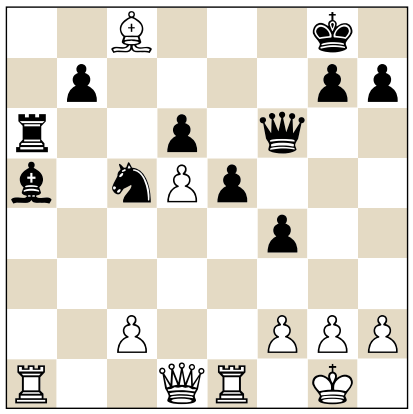
19.♖a3?

As the attentive reader may have noticed, this is often a good idea in this variation. Here, however, it seems to be somewhat premature. The priority should have been to stop Black's play starting with ...e5-e4. In fact, it was very much achievable, but in order to find the right idea, one must realize how vital the ...e5-e4 push is.

19.♗c7 is the most tempting move to begin with. Black has two natural ways of protecting the d6-pawn, both of which are possible:

– After 19...♖f6, 20.♖e1! is once again the move here, when 20...♕f8!?, intending ...♗d8, doesn't seem so clear either.

– After 19...♕g6 it turns out that direct attempts like ♗h5 or ♗g4 won't yield anything, so White has to resort to prophylactics: 20.♖e1!, and after the semi-forced sequence 20...♘c5 21.♗h5 ♕f6 22.♘b6 ♖a6 23.♘xc8 ♖xc8 24.♗b6 ♗d8! 25.♗g4 ♗xb6 26.♗xc8 ♗xa5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

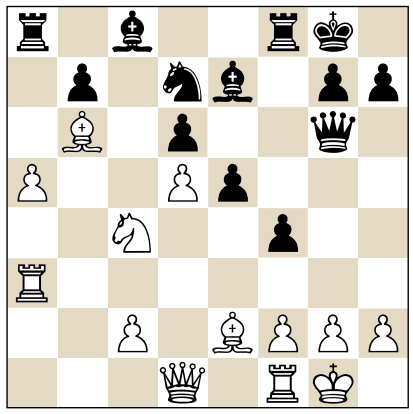
Black has what looks to me like full compensation for the exchange. In fact, it looks quite fortressy.

– 19.♗h5 is a flashy idea, but, as pointed out by Peter Svidler, provoking ...g7-g6 can also have downsides: 19...g6 20.♗e2 ♘xb6 21.♘xb6 ♖a7 22.♗g4 ♗f5!, and suddenly White can no longer claim light-square dominance, because ♗xf5 can now be met by ...gxf5!, controlling the key light squares e4 and g4.

– In fact, the strongest and the most flexible reply seems to be the immediate 19.♖e1!, taking ...e4 out of the position and preparing to blockade the e4-square: 19...♖f6, and now any one of the bishop moves ♗h5/♗g4/♗f3 would establish control over the e4-square. Black will have to be very creative to come up with some counter arguments of his own here, because if things follow their natural course, he will soon be positionally busted.

After 19...♕g6 20.♗d3 ♕g5 21.f3, White establishes full control over the e4-square and limits Black's play dramatically. Black will still be kicking, especially after the rook lift 21...♖f6 22.♗f2 ♖h6, but it seems that after 23.♗f1 White should be able to withstand the kingside initiative and, in the long run, win positionally on the queenside, with the knight sooner or later landing on b6. In the long perspective, the b7-pawn should not survive.

19...♕g6



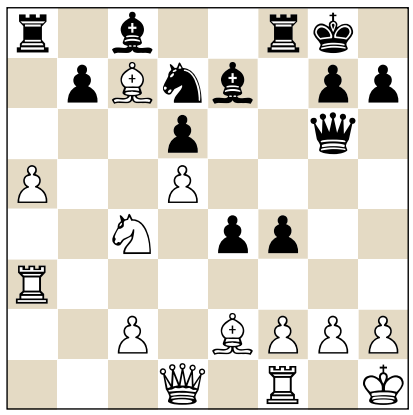
20.♗c7

20.♖e1 could now be met by 20...♘f6!?, not to mention that, with the queen already on g6, 20...e4 would be possible, too, when 21.♗h5 can be met by 21...♕f5.

20...e4

The immediate 20...b5!? had some point as well, without the natural inclusion of ...e4 ♔h1: 21.♘b6 ♘xb6 22.♗xb6 b4 23.♖b3. Now Black has the rather attractive option of 23...♗f5, hitting the c2-pawn. And ...e5-e4 is still on the cards here.

21.♔h1



21...b5!?

Flashy, but in fact not as killing as it may seem at first sight.

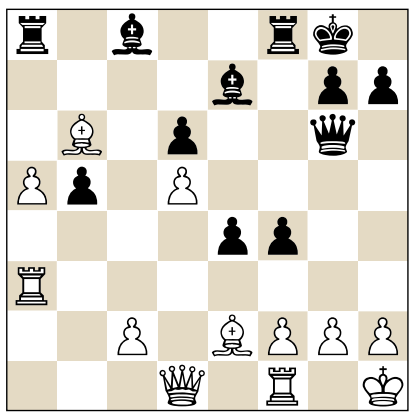
The deep 21...♕h6! was the strongest move, when it turns out that Black's ideas all gain in strength now that the queen has made a small but important side-step: 22.♖g1!?. This is the best move, but a rather desperate one as well (22.♖h3? contains a pretty obvious threat, but after 22...♕f6 it

turns out that White has to swing his rook back and Black has improved the position of his queen, since it now supports the ...♘e5 hop) 22...b5 23.♘b6 ♘xb6 24.♗xb6. This is a slightly better version for Black. He has the initiative, but White will keep on kicking. A possible sequence might be 24...b4!? 25.♖b3 ♗f6 26.♖xb4 f3! 27.gxf3 ♗e5 28.♖g3! ♗xg3 29.fxg3 exf3 30.♗xf3 ♗a6, and White has secured his king at the price of an exchange. But with open e- and f-files for Black's rooks, White still can't feel entirely comfortable here.

22.♘b6!

22.axb6 is greedy and in fact quite suicidal. After 22...♖xa3 23.♘xa3 f3! 24.gxf3 ♘e5! Black's attack develops by itself: 25.♖g1 ♕h6!.

22...♘xb6 23.♗xb6

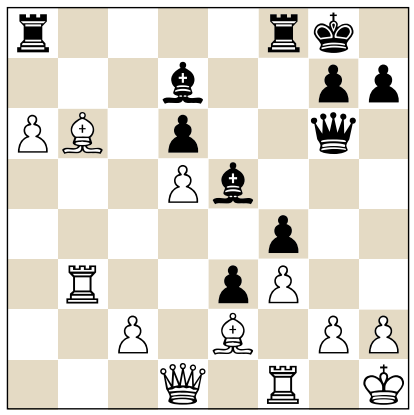


23...♕g5?

There were really many good options, but this, despite being extremely interesting and original, was not one of them. Perhaps the only move worse than this one was my first suggestion of 23...♗a6?. One idea of counterplay is to get ...♗f6-e5 and follow it up with ...f3. Black can either do that immediately, or start with ...♗d7 or ...b4.

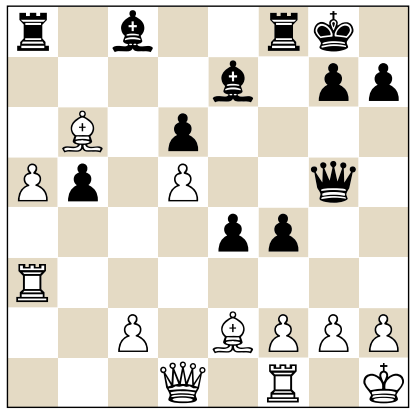
After 23...b4, Black has many options on every move, but I will give one sample line to demonstrate how a game between two geniuses could play out here: 24.♖b3 ♗f6 25.♖xb4 ♗c3 26.♖a4 ♗d7 27.♖a3 ♗b2 28.♖b3 ♗e5 29.f3 (the only move now, since ...f3 was a threat and 29.♖g1 ♕h6 30.f3 e3 is a worse version) 29...e3 30.a6

'It seems Fabiano trusted his opponent and didn't believe he could get away with 24.♗xb5.'



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

30...♕h6! (preparing ...♖f5, an important finesse. 30...♖f6 31.a7 ♕h5 looks just as logical, if not more, but there is the concrete issue of 32.♗xe3! fxe3 33.♖b8+ ♖f8 34.f4!, and White wins) 31.♗d3 ♕h5! 32.a7 ♖f6. Now ♗xe3 makes no sense due to the absence of the f4 idea. White's only way to save himself is a very desperate one: 33.♕e2! ♖h6 34.g4! (34.g3!) 34...fxg3 35.♗xe3 ♕xh2+ 36.♕xh2 ♖xh2+ 37.♔g1 ♗h3 (setting up the inevitable) 38.♖b8+ ♔f7 39.♖xa8 ♖g2+ 40.♔h1 ♖h2+, with the usual end result.

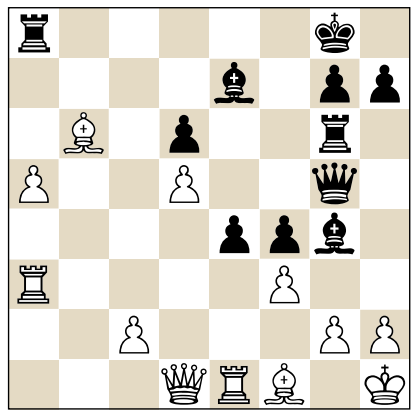


24.g3? Returning the favour. Fabiano wanted to clarify the kingside situation after all and later regretted this move, suggesting f3 instead. It seems he trusted his opponent and didn't believe he could get away with 24.♗xb5.

But 24.♗xb5 simply works, although obviously it's not possible to see it all unfold till the end. What is very important, and may have been missed by the players, is the fact that after the eventual ♗f1 and f3 the b6-bishop will control the g1-square: 24...♖f6 25.♖e1! (25.f3 e3 seems to be giving Black enough counterplay to keep the balance, the threat being ...♖h6 and ...♕g3) 25...♖g6 26.♗f1, and now:

– 26...f3 27.g3, and Black has no time to deliver mate here, since the e4-pawn is vulnerable and ♗e3 is also there if need be.

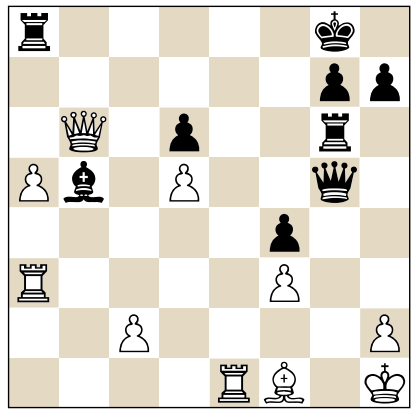
– 26...♗g4 27.f3!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

An important nuance, as mentioned, since the g1-square is suddenly neatly guarded by the b6-bishop.

– 26...♗f5 27.♖a4!. In fact, Black still has a way to stay in the game here: 27...♗g4 28.f3 exf3 29.gxf3 ♗d7! 30.♖a3 ♗d8! 31.♕d4 ♗xb6 32.♕xb6 ♗b5!?



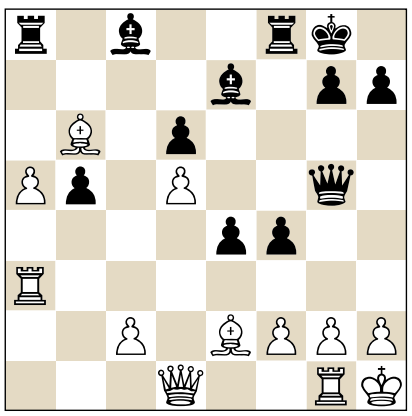
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A beautiful double deflection. 33.♕f2! ♗xf1 34.♕xf1 ♕xd5 35.a6 ♖e6, and with the white passed pawn being so far advanced and so

well protected, Black is not feeling comfortable here. On the other hand, the computer evaluation is within the boundaries of acceptable for Black. Perhaps he is even holding his own, objectively. White does have a weak king, which may be a factor once he tries to regroup his major pieces.

24.f3 e3 25.g3 was an attempt to clarify the situation on the kingside, but Black keeps the initiative even after the f4-pawn goes: 25...fxg3 26.♖g1 ♕h6 27.♖xg3 ♗g5!, followed by ...♗f4.

24.♖g1!? is actually a brilliant move:

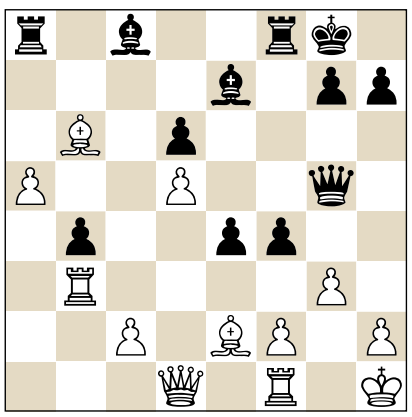


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

24...♖f6 seems very strong, but now White has a great way to defend himself: 25.♕d4! The e4-pawn is important, but after 25...♗f5 there suddenly is 26.g4!! ♗g6 27.♗xb5, and it's actually not easy to attack White's king with the g6-bishop in the way of the ...♖f6-h6 lift.

24...b4 25.♖b3

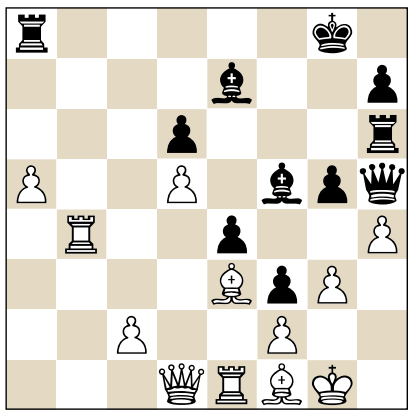
25.gxf4 was safer, but Black is comfortable after 25...♕xf4 26.♖b3 ♗f6 27.♖g1 ♗c3, when the c3-bishop controls the b3-rook.



25...♗h3

Initiating a forced sequence leading to a rather drawish position, although one in which Black is in control.

25...f3!? was more spirited, still going all out. In fact, White can maintain the balance here, too, but the variations are far more complicated: 26.♗b5 ♕g4 27.♖e1 ♖f6 (this is probably Black's best attempt to deliver checkmate) 28.♗f1 (28.♖xe4 ♕xe4 29.♖e3 is OK, according to the computer. I wouldn't be sure, even about 29...♕xe3 30.♗xe3 ♖xa5, but it's all zeros. In fact, once White goes h4 and ♔h2, the mating net will no longer look that dramatic and the queen can ask Black some questions, too) 28...♖h6 29.♗e3 g5 30.♖xb4 ♕h5 31.h4 ♗f5 32.♔g1.

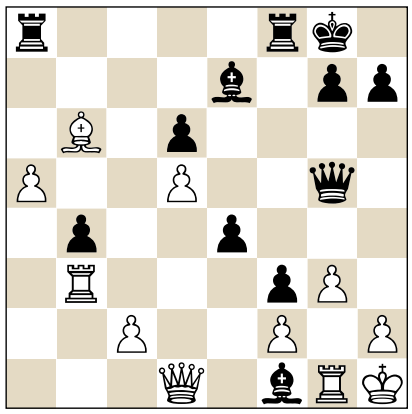


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

This really looks like checkmate in the making, but it turns out that White can hold. By a miracle, as some people like to say in these cases: 32...♕g4 33.♗g2!!. Now Black has many options, but pretty good seems 33...♖g6, which is met by the desperate 34.♗xf3! ♕xf3 35.♕xf3 exf3 36.a6!! ♖xa6 37.♗d4, with a draw.

26.♖g1 Forcing ...f3. 26.♖e1 is bad on account of 26...♗f6!.

26...f3 27.♗f1 ♗xf1



28.♕xf1! Better to give up the beautiful d5-pawn than to get mated.

28...♕xd5 29.♖xb4 ♕e6

Black now has clearly taken the risk out of the position. White's only trump is the a5-pawn, but Black can always trade down into a drawish major-piece endgame with ...♗d8. In fact, when Fabi found a decent move, that was exactly what Magnus decided to do.

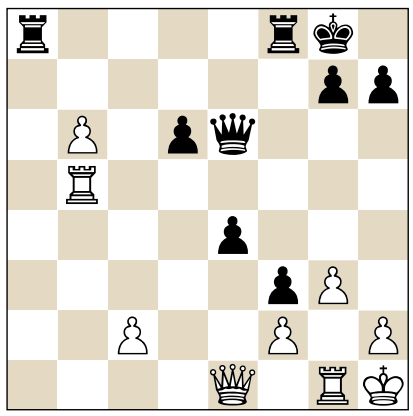
30.♖b5 ♗d8

30...♖fc8 31.♕b1!, followed by ♕b3, gives White just enough play of his own to secure equality.

31.♕e1 ♗xb6

31...d5 32.♕d2 is not a winning attempt by Black.

32.axb6

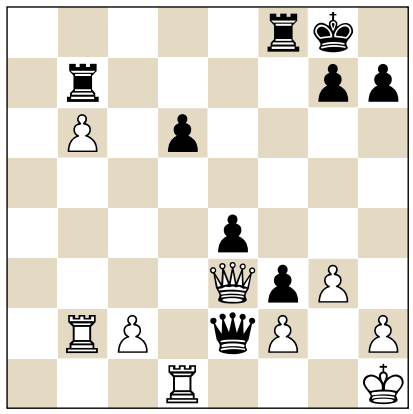


The position is now pretty equal. The b6-pawn is annoying, but so is the f3-pawn, and eventually both sides should find a way to simplify this into a draw. However, we were still treated to a couple of twists and turns.

32...♖ab8 33.♕e3

33.♕d2 was possible as well, and after the next few moves both sides had many options.

33...♕c4 34.♖b2 ♖b7 35.♖d1 ♕e2!?



Setting up a cute trap and making things slightly exciting.

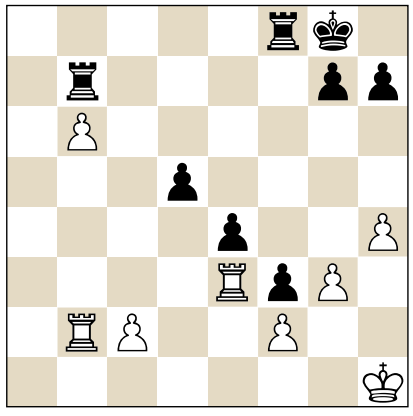
36.♖e1

The safest. 36.♕b3+ ♔h8 37.c4 traps the queen, but loses to a nice deflection: 37...♖xb6!.

36...♕xe3 37.♖xe3 d5

Asking White some final questions.

38.h4!



Good to give the king some space.

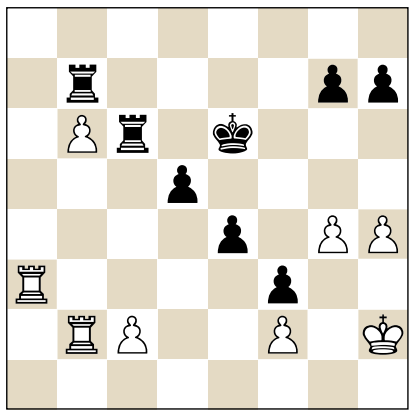
38...♖c8

38...♖fb8 39.c4! trades all the pawns.

39.♖a3 ♔f7 40.♔h2

For a second, when following the game live without the help of an engine, we thought that this would complicate matters, but Fabi has everything under control. The b6-pawn is pretty far advanced, and with one rook being so passive, it is hard for him to make much progress. 40.♖a7 was a more straightforward draw: 40...♖cb8 41.c4! dxc4 42.♖b4.

40...♔e6 41.g4 ♖c6



42.♖a6!?

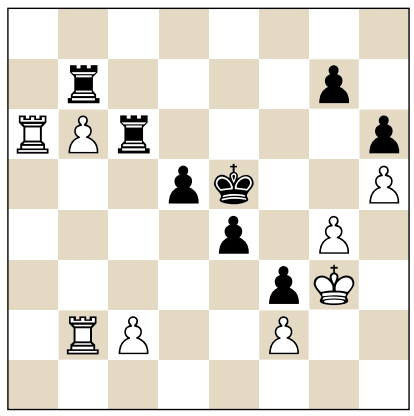
42.♖ab3 holds as well, but is more passive: 42...h6 43.♔g3 g5. This looks a little scary, since the king is caged in on the kingside, but the computer doesn't really care; still a draw.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Immediately after the match Fabiano Caruana tweeted: 'I feel that we put this beautiful game back on the map in America and hope it will inspire a new generation of players. I look forward to make another bid for the title.'

42...♔e5 43.♔g3 h6 44.h5

It was important to realize that 44...g5 is not dangerous. That being not the case, White is in no danger. Neither is Black, until suddenly a weird move came through.

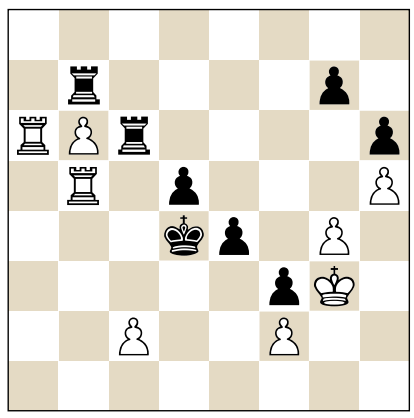


44...♔d4?!

44...g5 is just one of many ways to make a draw without being on the bad side of things: 45.hxg6 ♖xg6 46.♖b5 h5 47.♖aa5 ♖xg4+ 48.♔h3 ♔f6 49.♖xd5 ♖xb6 50.♖xh5 ♖g6, and this totally drawn.

45.♖b5!

White could suddenly get very excited and indeed, it wasn't clear how to stop the threats of ♖aa5, ♖a4+, c4 and what not.



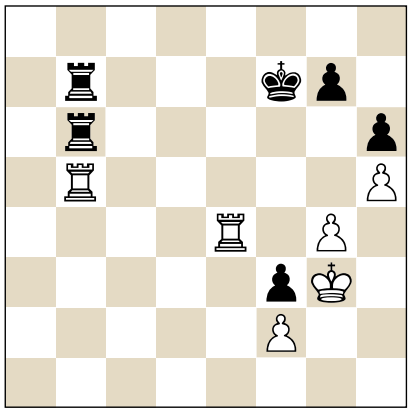
45...♖d6!

Keeping a cool head, Magnus finds a clean way to bail out into a 3 vs 2 endgame.

46.♖a4+ ♔e5 47.♖ab4 ♔e6 48.c4

48.c3 would eventually lead to the same thing, I assume: 48...♖c6 49.♖d4 ♖bxb6 50.♖bxd5 ♖xc3 51.♖a5, and White will win both the e4- and the f3-pawn, but he will struggle to prevent a rook trade in the process.

48...dxc4 49.♖xc4 ♖dxb6 50.♖xe4+ ♔f7



White should try to keep all four rooks on the board here, but there really seems to be no way of doing that. Even if Black was unable to force the desired trade immediately, White would have a tough time trying to activate his rooks without letting Black trade one. Fabiano takes the laid-back approach of not even trying to avoid the inevitable.

51.♖f5+ ♖f6 52.♖xf6+ ♔xf6 53.♔xf3 ♔f7 54.♔g3

Draw.

I think I wouldn't be able to resist wanting to play this one out, but I agree with Fabi that White has a zero percent chance of winning this position at this level. After the eventual f4/g5 White's pawns will be overextended and Black will harass the white king with checks. How it usually ends is that White goes ♔f5 at some point and Black goes ...g6+ hxg6, ...♔g7, and with two g-pawns White will be unable to win.

NOTES BY

Anish Giri

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
London 2018 (12)
Sicilian Defence, Sveshnikov Variation

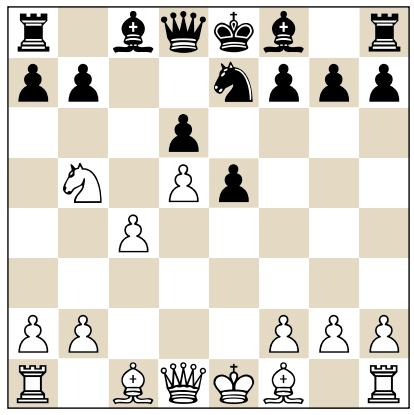
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♘d5

Caruana sticks to the same line against the Sveshnikov that he played in his two previous White games. Indeed, he had good reason to be satisfied with the opening outcome of those games, as well as with the double-edged character of the ensuing positions.

7...♘xd5 8.exd5 ♘e7!?

Not wanting to see what other move Team Fabi had in store for them, Team Carlsen deviates first.

9.c4



9...♘g6

9...♘f5 is possible, too, but not 9....a6? when, after 10.♕a4!, Black is suddenly losing, since there is no sensible defence against ♘xd6.

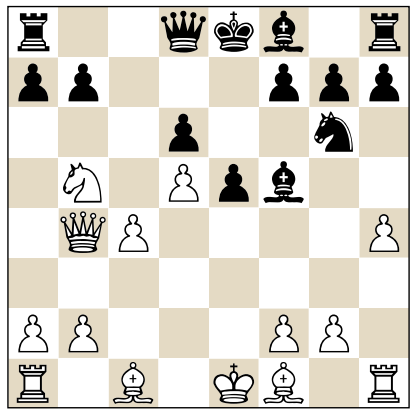
10.♕a4 ♗d7 11.♕b4

So far, so well-known; following the game Kramnik-Roganovic from the Batumi Olympiad.

11...♗f5

11...♕b8 is also possible, and can, in fact, lead to similar positions after 12.h4 h5.

12.h4! Following Big Vlad.



12...h5!?

This is the first real surprise, and a pretty serious one, too, because Fabi clearly improved from here on in, and started spending a lot of time as well.

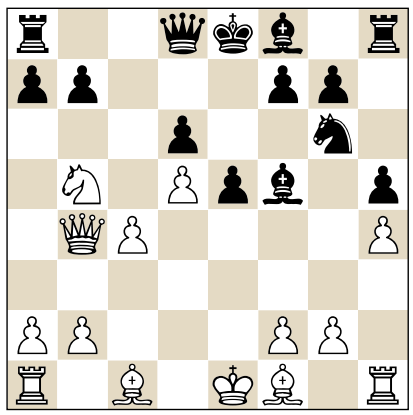
13.♕a4

Repeating the position once never hurts, but since Fabiano spent half an hour here, clearly unfamiliar with this particular deviation, it began to look increasingly likely that he would just get it over with at this point.

There were some clear arguments in favour: firstly, such surprises are never pleasant, and secondly, you do not want to start a game against a well-prepared opponent half an hour down on the clock, especially when losing is not an option you can afford.

However, your pride is also on the line, and one could argue that your mental state going into the tiebreak might also be important.

13...♗d7 14.♕b4 ♗f5

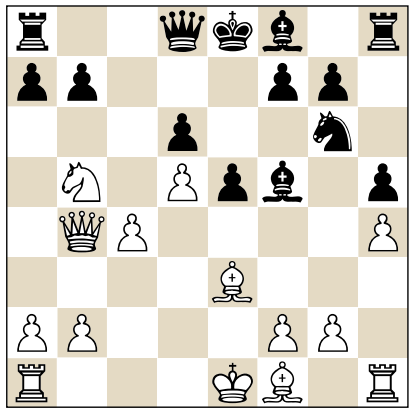


15.♗e3?!

The logic is clear: Fabi neither wants to repeat moves, nor go for Magnus's prep after 15.♗g5. But playing a sub-optimal move just to avoid preparation, something we have all done on occasion, is often a bad idea. Fortunately for Fabiano, he remained unpunished for this one.

15.♗g5 ♕b8 was played in the only game that reached this point, which was a computer game. In fact, this will most likely transpose to the game after, let's say, 16.g3 a6 17.♘c3 ♕c7 18.♗e3 ♗e7, which also seems to explain Magnus' decision to play 15...a6 and 16...♕c7 without too much hesitation.

15...♗e7? 16.♗xe7 ♔xe7 could work, if not for 17.c5!, which is trouble. 15...f6 is ugly, while 15...♕d7 will be met by the sophisticated 16.♕a5 b6 17.♕a4, when Black finally has to play the ugly ...f6 and ...♔f7.

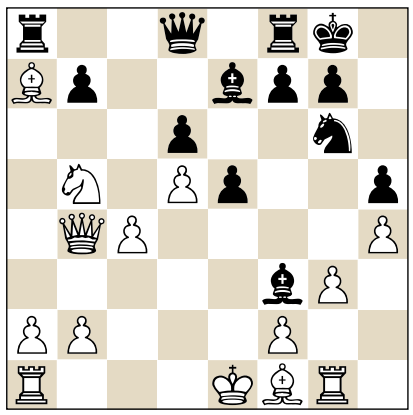


15...a6?!

Transposing to a familiar position, but missing a superb resource.

After 15...♗e7! Black has huge dynamic potential on the kingside, and there was no need to be shy:

– 16.g3 ♗e4 17.♖g1 ♗f3 18.♗xa7 0-0



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

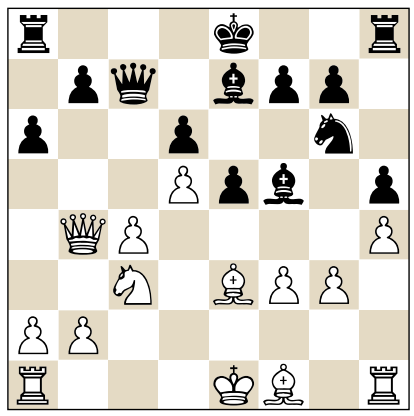
White's king is somewhat stuck in the middle, and Black has everything that all Sicilian players would give a pawn for.

– Or 16.♘xa7 0-0 17.♗e2 ♘f4!? 18.♗xf4 exf4 19.♘b5 ♖e8, and with so many juicy files and diagonals for his pieces, and his domination of the dark squares, Black is on top.

16.♘c3 ♕c7 17.g3 ♗e7 18.f3

This seems a little odd, but Fabi must have been concerned about ...e4, ...♘e5 ideas.

It would probably have been best to allow ...e4 and just get on with developing by 18.♗e2, when Black has to choose between 18...e4, which should be met by the clever 19.♕a4+!, and 18...♘f8, followed by ...♘d7, as was played in the game. But then White would take control by castling kingside and trading the d7-knight with ♘a4-b6. The ...♗g6/... f5 idea would be met by f2-f4!, closing the kingside.



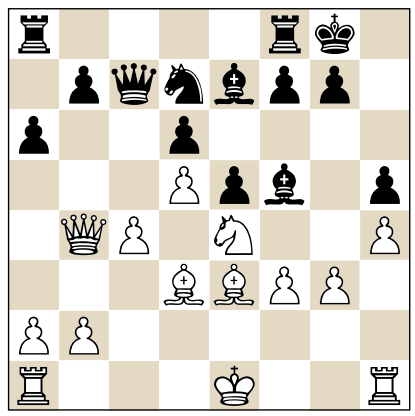
18...♘f8!?

I was rooting for something more dynamic, as I was incited by the slow and shaky-looking f2-f3, but Magnus, familiar with the position, goes for this very sound regrouping. The knight on g6 was Black's main issue in the position, and with ...e5-e4 prevented, this is its only alternative route.

After 18...0-0 19.♗e2, the problem is that White can still castle either way, depending on Black's response.

19.♘e4 An original way to secure the d3-square for the bishop.

19...♘d7 20.♗d3 0-0



21.♖h2?

The idea of preparing queenside castling is deep, but this move is a bit too original for its own good. Black finds an excellent way to meet 0-0-0 without going for ...b5, against which the ♖h2-♖c2 lift would indeed be brilliant.

21.0-0 ♗g6 22.♕d2 was more down-to-earth and should have been played. The position after 22...f5 23.♘g5 ♗xg5 24.♗xg5 is at the very least acceptable for White. Black will get some typical Najdorf play with ...e4 and ...♘e5, but his g6-bishop looks a little unhappy with all that.

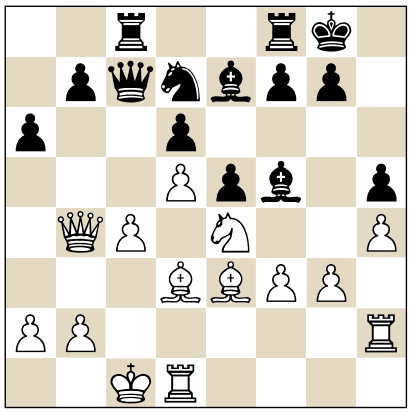
NEW IN CHESS

The first moves of Game 12, another Sveshnikov. The Challenger ended up in trouble, but the Champion didn't have the right mind-set to push for a win.

21.0-0-0 is met by 21...b5!, when it would surely be nice to have the h1-rook on c2.

21...♖ac8 21...b5 is now counterproductive in view of 22.♖c2!.

22.0-0-0 Fabi had left himself no choice but to go queenside.

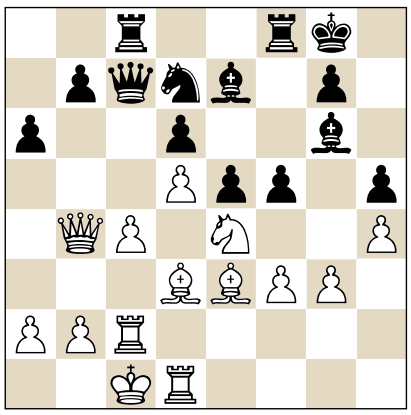


22...♗g6!

Black's only active idea with ...b5 off the table, but an extremely good one. Now it turns out that ...f5, followed by ...e4, is unstoppable and that White is in trouble.

23.♖c2 23.♔b1 f5 24.♘g5 ♗xg5 25.hxg5 e4 26.fxe4 ♘e5 is great for Black as well, e.g. 27.♗e2 ♘g4!?.

23...f5



24.♘f2

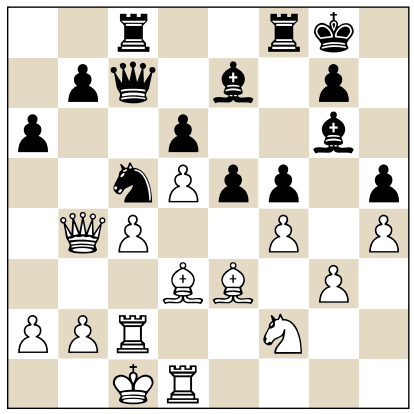
This can't have been the plan, but after the natural 24.♘g5 Black's initiative would develop by itself, which Fabi wasn't keen on allowing.

After 24.♘g5, 24...♗xg5 25.hxg5 e4 26.♗f1!? (26.fxe4 fxe4 27.♗e2, and Black will send the knight to d3 and the rook to f3, and White is in a lot of trouble, e.g. 27...♘c5 28.♔b1 ♖f3) is clever, intending ♗f4 and shutting down the g6-bishop, but it doesn't change the fact that Black is on top: 26...f4! 27.♗xf4 ♘c5, and with the g6-bishop suddenly becoming a beast, White has good reason to worry.

24...♘c5 25.f4

This invites some very unpleasant shots, but White had no easy solution here.

25.♗xc5 would stop some immediate breakthroughs, but then Magnus could win even without wanting to. Black's dark-square dominance is going to count for something.



25...a5?!

Black remains in charge, but there were already some ways to go for the finishing line.

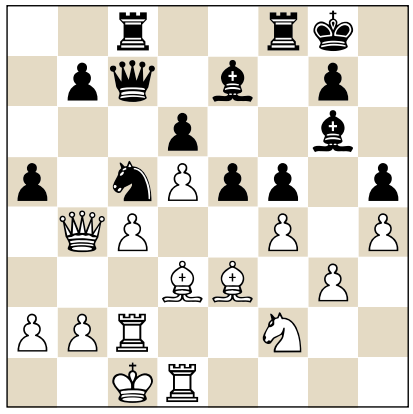
At this point, 25...b5! would have given Black a pretty much winning initiative:

– 26.♗xc5 dxc5 27.♕d2 e4 28.♗f1 ♕d7, followed by ...♗f6, is slowly winning for Black because of his dark-square domination.

– 26.♕a3 was Carlsen's suggestion at the press conference, but besides the simple 26...exf4!, there is also a prettier win: 26...♕b6!, threatening 27...b4, as well as the more hidden 27...♘b3+!.

– 26.♗e2 was probably Fabiano's intention, but he may have missed a strong resource: 26...a5! 27.♕d2 (after 27.♕xb5, 27...♗e8! suddenly traps the queen) 27...b4 28.♗xc5 (28.fxe5 b3!) 28...♕xc5 29.♘d3. This doesn't help, since with the essential dark-squared bishop missing, White will just lose after 29...♕d4!: 30.c5 e4!.

25...exf4! is an even lazier way to start a crushing attack: 26.♗xf4 (26.gxf4 ♗xh4!) 26...b5!, and now the same attack. In fact, I don't even have to give variations, because there aren't any. ...♗f6 is coming and then Black can choose whether to win by opening the b-file with ...bxc4 or with a slower queenside assault with ...b4, ...a5 and ... a4.



26.♕d2

26.♕a3!? is quite deep, but might in fact be the right square for the queen: 26...♘a6 27.♔b1 e4 28.♗e2 b5. This looks like bad news, although White fights on with 29.♕b3!, with the idea to meet 29...b4 with 30.c5!, and after 29...♘c5 30.cxb5 ♘xb3 31.♖xc7 ♖xc7 32.b6 ♖b7 33.♗a6!, White has good chances to escape.

26...e4 27.♗e2 ♗e8 28.♔b1 ♗f6 29.♖e1?!

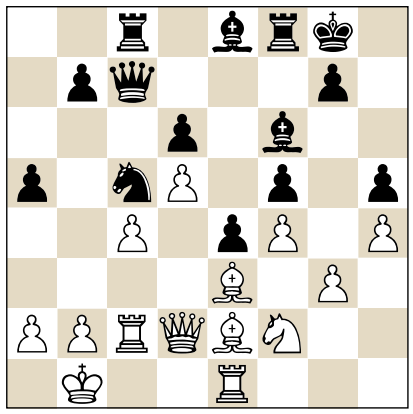
Allows one more ...b5 shot.

29.♖dc1 was stronger. White's

London 2018

																		tiebreak (25 min + 10 sec)				
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			1	2	3	4	
Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2835	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	6	2832	1	1	1	-	3
Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2832	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	6	2835	0	0	0	-	0

main hope is something like 29...g6 (29...♗a4 30.♗xh5!) 30.♘d1 ♗a4 31.b3 ♗d7 32.♘c3, followed by 33.♘b5, pretending it's a fortress, although I am not at all sure if that's the case.



29...a4?! Missing another attractive opportunity.

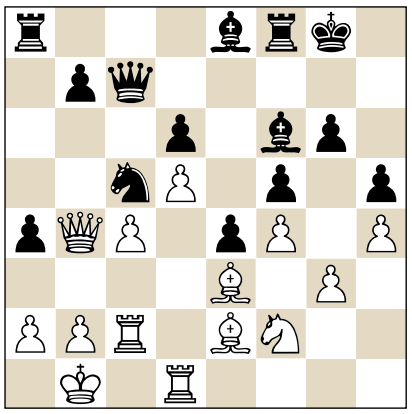
Fabi pointed out 29...♗a4! at the press conference. Often the defender sees more resources for the attacker: 30.♖cc1 b5 31.cxb5 ♕b6, and with the b-file open, the d3-square exposed and the d5-pawn weak, Black would get dangerously close to a victory: 32.♗d4 ♗xd4 33.♕xd4 ♗xb5. And here is where Sesse gave -2 and Carlsen pretended not to care.

30.♕b4 g6

Magnus was clearly not in a rush, and with this position could undeniably afford it.

31.♖d1 Magnus having counted on 31.♘d1, this move left him completely confused, so he decided to confuse everyone else as well and offered a draw.

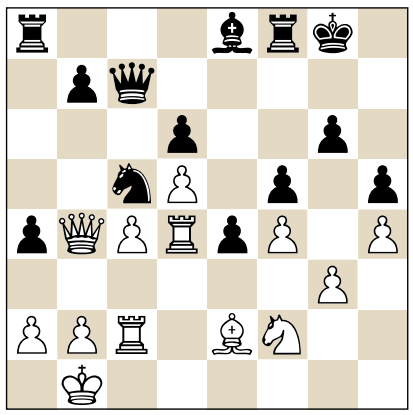
31...♖a8



Draw. It seems that, since he was happy with a draw in this potentially crucial game in his career, and having the black pieces against the worthiest of challengers, Magnus was not willing to change gear and start to actively pursue a win. And truth be told, if you don't want to go for the ...b5 break in this position, there is indeed not much to play for.

32.♘h3, sending the knight to g5, is not great, because ♘e6 can always be met by ...♗xe6 and ...♖fe8xe6. Also, once the knight is out of place, Carlsen's idea of ...♕a5 gains in strength, since the knight will not return to c3 in time to block the ...b5 break.

At the press conference, Carlsen gave a surreal (for his standards) variation to support his decision: 32.♗d4 ♗xd4?! (32...♘d3 33.♕b6 ♕xb6 34.♗xb6 ♘b4 35.♖cc1 a3 36.b3 ♗b2 wins an exchange, but I doubt that this is a fortress) 33.♖xd4, and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

– 33...♕a5? 34.♕xa5 ♖xa5 35.♘d1 b5 36.cxb5 ♗xb5 37.♗xb5 ♖xb5 38.♘c3 ♖a5 leads to equality. First of all, as said there is the fairly obvious 32...♘d3! resource, but in addition, the bishop trade will leave White with a very dangerous position, with a weak king on b1, and ...b5 in the offing, so the reason for the rush with the queen trade is not at all clear.

– But after 33...♗d7 34.♘d1 ♖a5 35.♘e3 (35.♘c3 a3 36.b3 ♘a6 traps the queen) 35...♖b8, if we teleported the white king to g2, everything would probably be completely hunky-dory, except that once White embarks on this journey, he will be hit badly by ...b5. ■

BEREND VONK

SHORT

DEADLOCKED

The opera critic and television presenter William Hartston once quipped that the pain of defeat exceeds the joy of victory, and that therefore chess is a net contributor to human misery. This jocular condemnation of my life's vocation, alas, contains at least an element of truth. Perhaps Carlsen and Caruana, who were deadlocked after twelve straight draws in the classical part of the World Championship final in London, take a similarly glum view of the benefits of risk and reward.

It would not be hyperbole to suggest that these mental gladiators – both outstanding practitioners of our noble game – have unwittingly plunged chess into an existential crisis. By the end of the match even the most patient and respectful members of the restive crowd of global onlookers were baying for blood. In fairness, it is the administrators, who concocted the regulations, rather than the players themselves, who are the main culprits for this unsanguinary spectacle. The players' objective is to win, not to entertain the vile multitude. They are extremely strong, accurate and evenly matched. With one notable exception, nor can they be accused of want of effort. The average number of moves played, in London, has been rather high. In part, this is because the Sofia rules forbid premature peace-making, but also because they are both, by nature, fighting players. But the simple fact of the matter is that chess is, particularly at the absolute pinnacle, a drawish game, and deep computer analysis is making it ever more so. The real question is how the World Championship can be reinvigorated, preferably without making a bonfire of tradition. But, if tinkering fails, radical measures may need to be countenanced in future.

The first point to consider is whether the most important title in chess should be decided by tournament or by match play. The former format has its benefits, particularly for the spectator, as we have seen most recently in San Luis, in 2005, and Mexico City, in 2007. There is almost invariably something of interest to watch, even if one or two of the games per round prove to be damp squibs. The main drawback is, however, potentially fatal. Tournaments are wide open for collusion. Although we are no longer living in the era of Commie cheating, as Fischer alleged with considerable justification in Curaçao in 1962 (not quite a final, admittedly, but the point remains the same), it would be naive in the extreme to imagine that such a thing could never happen again, particularly with large sums of money at stake. But there is another issue with tournaments: they simply do not carry the same gravitas.

So match play it is then. But what should be the right length, format and tempo? While researching this article, I was surprised to discover just how many matches had unlimited duration and involved the first to win a set number of games (6, 8 or 10). In eras of feeble defensive technique, such scheduling uncertainty perhaps did not matter so much, but the epic 34-game Capablanca-Alekhine confrontation of 1927 – a financial nightmare for the organisers – ought to have killed the idea stone-dead. Even that most conservative of sports, cricket, abandoned Timeless Tests when the Durban match of 1939 was agreed drawn so that the England players, who were within touching distance of victory over South Africa after 9 days play, could catch the boat home. But it took chess several further decades – until 1984-5, and the first, farcical, unfinished Karpov-Kasparov match, played over 5 groaning months – for the final nail to be hammered in the coffin of open-ended contests.

'The real question is how the World Championship can be reinvigorated, preferably without making a bonfire of tradition.'

When a draw simply maintains the status quo, both antagonists can be, to some degree, satisfied, which is why the two above-mentioned matches smashed all records for span. Tacitly conniving to prolong the tussle, with a metaphorical nod and a wink, becomes an addictive habit. Thus, it is perhaps worth revisiting the idea of allowing the defending champion to retain his title if undefeated, provided the match is long enough to give the challenger a fair chance. This means that, at any moment, one or the other player is leading and

that it is incumbent upon his opponent to unbalance the situation. And if the Challenger cannot, say, score 8½ points over 16 games, why should he deserve to win?

But even without going down that contentious route, there is plenty that can be done to enliven proceedings. Another profoundly unsatisfactory aspect of the current schedule is the superfluity of rest days. While no one is proposing to demean the prestige of the World Championship by inserting horrors like double-rounds, it is absurd that two young men, in the peak of their physical condition, should be pampered with so much time for recuperation. It would be possible to add an extra four(!!) games to the current match, while finishing on the same date, much to the delight of parsimonious organisers, and yet still provide the contestants with three days of rest. Quite frankly, that ought to be sufficient, although one could perhaps throw in a pause before the tie-break, if one were feeling particularly generous.

At a mere twelve games, Carlsen-Caruana is very much at the short end of the spectrum when it comes to title fights. Vulgar profiteering, and not sporting considerations, has regrettably driven this decision. Lasker-Schlechter, in 1910, was the briefest match, at just ten games, and it too had a high draw percentage. It may be difficult to prove, but my strong hunch is that conservatism is one of the unintended consequences of this format, because it is so much harder to bounce back after defeats. At the press conference after Game 12, the players deflected criticism and implicitly acknowledged this deficiency by both stating that they were not averse to a longer contest.

I would propose one further, important reform: that the Sofia no-agreed-draw rule should be extended to the time-control at move 40, rather than move 30, at present. This would prevent the debacle of Game 12, when Magnus let Fabiano off the hook with a lily-livered peace-offering, despite his opponent being in awkward time-pressure and having a worse position to boot. This genuinely shocked not only most of grandmasters in the VIP room, but also Garry Kasparov, in New York, who, in a rare break from his political proclamations, took to Twitter to express his profound dismay. I don't see why the general public, who all have their engines, can see who stands better, and are expecting some drama, should be short-changed either. Of course, there will be fundamentalists who would like to see Sofia rules extended further still. But before jumping on the bandwagon, ask yourself who, in their right minds, would want to see the bishops of opposite colour endgame of Game 11 played on pointlessly once Fabiano had demonstrated the correct defence?

By themselves I hope these reforms ought to make enough of a difference to rescue the crown jewel of chess from obloquy, without resorting to gimmicks. Some people have imaginatively proposed holding the tie-break before the actual match. For those who enjoy eating dessert before soup and main course, it may be fine, but for the rest of us it seems perverse and unnatural. After all, one doesn't always get to dessert, unless one is gluttonous. More pertinent is the point made by former European Chess Union President, Silvio Danailov, who has criticised the 'insufferable, museum time-control'. I have rather more sympathy with this opinion because quickening the tempo is practically guaranteed to produce more decisive results. Historically, the long-term trend for chess has been to become ever faster. But given the fact that we already have both rapid and blitz world champions, it would seem unnecessary to impose sweeping changes here either. That said, time-controls are permanently under review. Some measure of tightening is most definitely an option.

'The World Championship is the single best advertisement for chess that we have.'

To some, these debates may seem arcane, but the subject is actually desperately important. The World Championship is the single best advertisement for chess that we have. A good match has the power to inspire an entire generation, not only in the country of the victor and the host nation, but all over the world. Carlsen-Caruana has been one of the most eagerly anticipated matches in recent years. It would be wrong and absurd to claim it has been devoid of interest. But with this embarrassing draw-fest we are in danger of alienating both sponsors and public alike.

Nigel Short

AlphaZero's Thoughts

And what would AlphaZero think about the World Championship match that was held at a stone's throw from DeepMind's headquarters in London? **MATTHEW SADLER** and **NATASHA REGAN**, authors of *Game Changer: AlphaZero's Groundbreaking Chess Strategies and the Promise of AI*, provide a glimpse.

The idea of analysing the World Championship Match between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana together with AlphaZero, London-based DeepMind's general-purpose artificial intelligence system, first occurred to us just after the thrilling Candidates Tournament held in Berlin in March 2018. Still in the middle of writing our book about AlphaZero and thrilled by the incredible games we were seeing, we felt that – despite all the attention that the match would receive from other silicon and human commentators – AlphaZero's perspective could still add something unique and valuable.

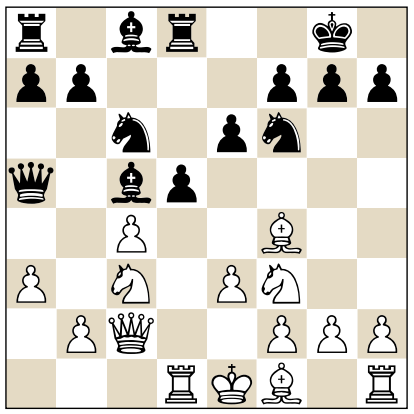
Part of the mystery of a match lies in the opening choices, in which the intentions of a competitor never fully become revealed. For example, Caruana's Queen's Gambit Declined seemed to cast a huge shadow over Carlsen's White games. From the outside, it felt as if Caruana's choice of opening had significantly disrupted Carlsen's strategy with the White pieces and made him lose confidence in 1.d4. The strange thing is that we never got to see the reason for this loss of confidence: both in Game 2 and Game 7, Carlsen attempted to make progress in sidelines rather than testing out Caruana's preparation in the main lines.

In this article, we thought it would be interesting to take a deeper look at some of those intriguing moments in the Queen's Gambit Declined and get AlphaZero's thoughts on what it considered to be best play.

Game 2 was in retrospect a crucial moment for Caruana in the match: after a fraught first game in which he had been required to muster all his defensive mastery to counter Carlsen's stellar opening and middle-game strategy, Caruana achieved the first of many comfortable draws with Black with excellent preparation.

Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
London 2018 (2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.♕c2 ♘c6 9.a3 ♕a5 10.♖d1 ♖d8



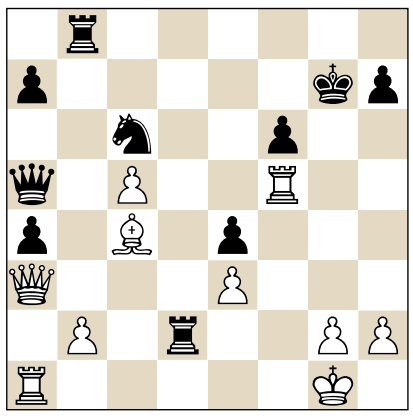
This rare choice from Caruana was not AlphaZero's main choice, which preferred the standard main line 10...♗e7. AlphaZero – like most commentators – recommended 11.♘d2, with a fairly positive expected score of 65-70%. Still closer to a draw than a

win but definitely chances for White. Let's take a look at some of the lines that AlphaZero looked at in building up this assessment.

11.♘d2 dxc4

AlphaZero's main continuation.

11...d4 is great fun, but (impressively) AlphaZero's 1-millisecond line is essentially the main line you find after analysing with other engines: Black sacrifices a piece, gets it back and ends up a bit worse with a terrible pawn structure: 12.♘b3 ♕b6 13.♘a4 ♗b4+ 14.axb4 ♕xb4+ 15.♘d2 ♕a5 16.♕b3 e5 17.♗g5 ♘b4 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♗e2 ♗d7 20.♖a1 dxe3 21.fxe3 b5 22.0-0 bxa4 23.♕c3 f5 24.♘f3 f6 25.♘h4 ♘c6 26.♕a3 e4 27.c5 ♖ab8 28.♘xf5 ♗xf5 29.♖xf5 ♔g7 30.♗c4 ♖d2



is AlphaZero's main line, with an almost 60% expected score. We suppose that with deep preparation of

'Wouldn't Magnus have enjoyed this as White?'

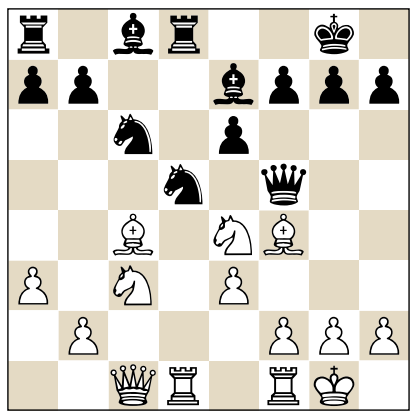
this middlegame as Black, you might be able to get away with this line if you're happy fighting for a draw.

12.♘xc4

AlphaZero's preferred choice, though we were keener on the more aggressive 12.♗xc4, keeping more pieces on the board.

12.♗xc4 ♗e7, and now:

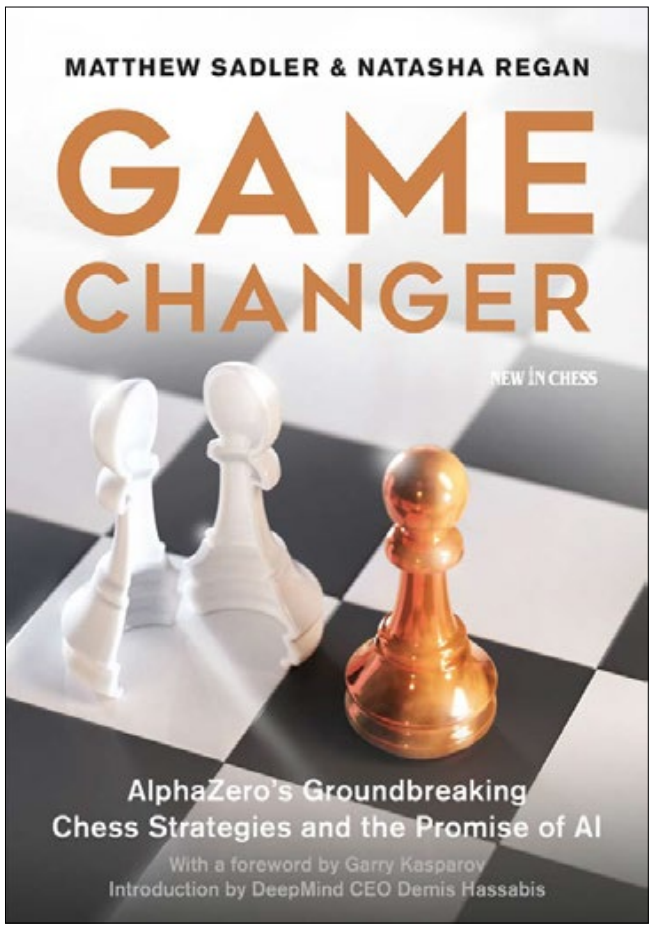
A) 13.0-0 ♕f5 (the only move AlphaZero spent any time on) 14.♘de4 ♘d5 15.♕c1 (15.♗g3 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♖xd1 – 16...♘e5 17.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 18.♕d1 ♗b6 19.♘d6 ♕f6 20.♗b5 was good for White in Graf-Dobrev, Leipzig 2007 (1-0, 34) – 17.♖xd1 e5 made AlphaZero less happy than the main line)



15...♘xf4 (15...♘xc3 16.♘xc3 e5 17.♘d5 ♗e6 18.♗d3 ♕h5 19.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 20.♗g3 ♖ac8 21.♗c2, with a 62% expected score for White) 16.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 (16...♗xd8 17.exf4 ♗c7 18.g3 ♗d7 19.♖d1 ♗e8, with a 63% expected score for White – the ideas are very similar to the main line) 17.exf4 ♗d7, and now a main line that feels tactically very fraught, but was more or less the only line that AlphaZero seriously considered(!): 18.b4 ♖c8 19.♖d1 ♗a4 (19...♖xc4 20.♖xd7 ♕xe4 21.♕d2 ♕c6 22.♖xe7 wins for White) 20.♘d6 ♗xd6 21.♖xd6 ♕c2 22.♕e3 ♗e8 23.♗f1 ♘c6 24.♖d2 ♕b3 25.♘e4 ♕xe3 26.fxe3 ♔f8 27.♘d6 ♖c7 28.e4 f6 29.♗b5 ♔e7 30.e5, with a 59% expected score for White.

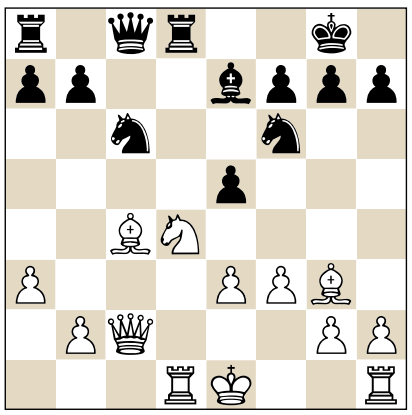
This line is an example of why analysing with AlphaZero in the opening is an unusually instructive experience. Out of a mass of possibilities, it invariably takes a clear, coherent view on one path and pursues it with enormous focus and vigour. It's like having Karpov or Kramnik on tap and asking them for a clear opinion about any position! The resulting line is a wonderful framework around which to build your own understanding of the position and develop your own ideas. It's going too far to claim that AlphaZero's view on the position represents perfection and to accept it without question, but it is unfailingly interesting and challenging for the opponent.

B) 13.♗d3 was an almost equivalent move, according to AlphaZero. Again we like this move a little more than AlphaZero's main line, as it keeps more pieces on the board: 13...e5 14.♘c4 ♕c7 15.♘b5 ♕b8 16.♗g3 ♗g4 17.f3 ♗e6 18.♘d4 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4 ♕c8, when you feel that White should have a path to a small annoying edge.


MATTHEW SADLER & NATASHA REGAN
GAME CHANGER
NEW IN CHESS
AlphaZero's Groundbreaking Chess Strategies and the Promise of AI
With a foreword by Garry Kasparov
Introduction by DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis

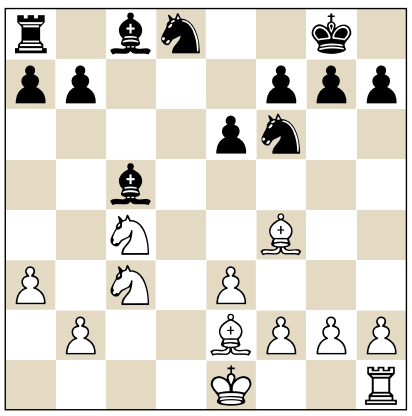
In January 2019, *Game Changer* will be published, a 416 page book by Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan. With unparalleled access to AlphaZero and its team of developers, the authors investigated more than two thousand previously unpublished games and reveal the revolutionary program's thinking process. The authors present stunning discoveries in all areas: opening preparation, piece mobility, initiative, attacking techniques, long-term sacrifices and much more.

‘AlphaZero invariably takes a clear, coherent view on one path and pursues it with enormous focus and vigour.’



This is AlphaZero’s main line: 20.♘xc6 ♕xc6 21.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22.♕b3 ♔f8 23.0-0 ♘d5 24.♗f2 a6 25.♖d1 ♘b6 26.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 27.♕d1 ♗f6 28.♗a2 – wouldn’t Magnus have enjoyed this as White? – 28...♘a4 29.♕d2 e4 30.♗d5 ♕d7 31.♕b4+ ♔g8 32.♕xb7 ♕xb7 33.♗xb7 ♗xb2 34.♗c6 ♘c5 35.a4, ending with a 59% expected score for White.

12...♖xd1+ 13.♕xd1 ♕d8 14.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 15.♗e2

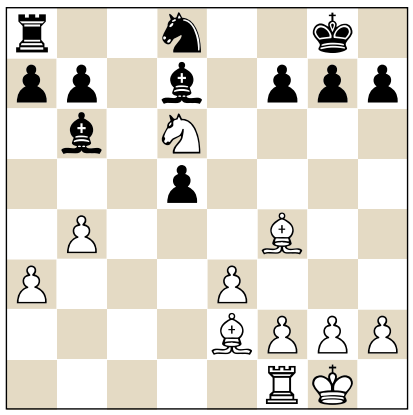


Black has two approaches in this position: quiet development with 15...♗d7, or the more forceful 15...♘d5, which aims to achieve immediate liquidation. We decided to take on AlphaZero from this position using some help from engines where required.

15.♘a4 ♗f8 16.♘ab6 is a surprising idea that was first tried by Euwe in 1954 but seems insufficient for an advantage: 16...axb6 17.♘xb6 ♖a5 18.♘xc8 ♖c5 19.♘b6 g5 20.♗g3 ♖c2 21.♘a4 ♘e4, Gerusel-Eisinger, Bad Aibling 1965, was drawn in 35 moves.

15...♗d7

AlphaZero likes 15...♘d5 less, moving to a solid 71% expected score for White: 16.♘xd5 exd5 17.♘d6 ♗d7 (the favourite move of the engines, completing development before trying to liquidate Black’s isolated d-pawn with ...d5-d4. On 17...d4 White plays 18.e4) 18.b4 (18.♔d2 d4 19.e4 ♘e6 20.♗g3 ♗c6 21.f3 ♖d8 22.e5 a5 23.♗c4 a4 was assessed by AlphaZero as a 54% expected score for White) 18...♗b6 19.0-0



19...♘e6 (as Black, AlphaZero was keener on plans with ...a5, to swap off as many pawns as possible) 20.♗g3 d4 21.♗f3 ♗c6 (21...dxe3 22.♗xb7 ♖f8 23.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 24.♔h1 ♗b6 25.♗d5 – AlphaZero is starting to get very positive about this, moving to a 75% expected score) 22.♗xc6 bxc6 23.♘c4 dxe3 24.fxe3 ♘g5 25.♖d1 ♘e4 26.♖d7 ♔f8 was a 65% expected score for White.

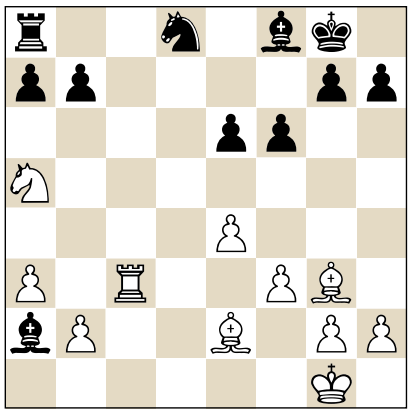
16.0-0 ♗c6 This was my (Matthew) favoured solid approach, and the engines were very happy with it, too.

17.♖c1 ♗f8 18.♗g3 ♘d5 Black starts to exchange minor pieces.

19.♘a5

Playing the knight to a5 is a recurring plan in these positions. It makes Black’s light-squared bishop insecure and ties down a black piece to the defence of the b7-pawn. If Black plays ...b6, then White gets some extra weak light squares to work with.

19...♘xc3 20.♖xc3 ♗d5 21.f3 f6 22.e4 ♗a2



... and that’s why you need engines to help you! We were extremely nervous about this move, but it seems crucial to keeping Black’s position together.

23.♔f1

23.b3 b6 24.♘c4 ♖c8 and the bishop is impossible to catch!

23...b6 24.♘c6 e5 25.♗f2 ♗e6

Here AlphaZero’s evaluation starts to drop from 68% evaluation to 62%.

26.♗b5 ♗f7 27.♘xd8 ♖xd8 28.♔e2 ♗d6 29.♗c4 h5 30.b4 ♗xc4+ 31.♖xc4 ♔f8 32.a4

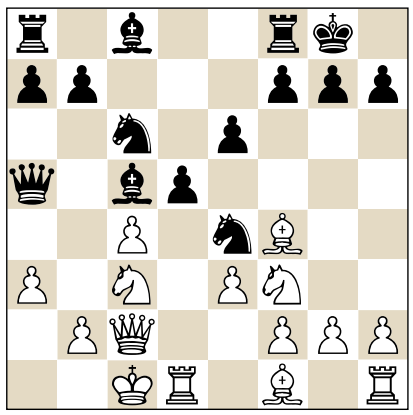
AlphaZero’s evaluation is at a 66% expected score, but White’s advantage feels manageable for Black. All-in-all, Black’s position is not fun to play – Black is only playing for two results – but backed by some accurate computer preparation (for example, a few ideas like 22...♗a2 in our main line) Black should be able to count on navigating to an endgame in which White’s advantage probably cannot be realized.

Having said that, we do feel that Magnus might have tried to test Fabiano in one of these main lines: it looks like substantially more of an edge than Magnus managed in the two sidelines he attempted, for just as little risk.

It would be too much to hope for in a World Championship match, but we were of course intrigued by AlphaZe-

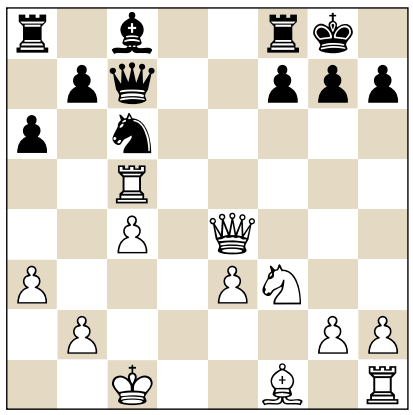
ro's favoured response to White's most aggressive option: 10.0-0-0. Something you notice about AlphaZero's play in the opening as Black is that it runs with any glimpse of active play. Material sacrifices are completely permissible to support that. So... what did AlphaZero want?

Queen's Gambit Declined 5.♗f4 AlphaZero analysis 10.0-0-0
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.♕c2 ♘c6 9.a3 ♕a5 10.0-0-0 ♘e4



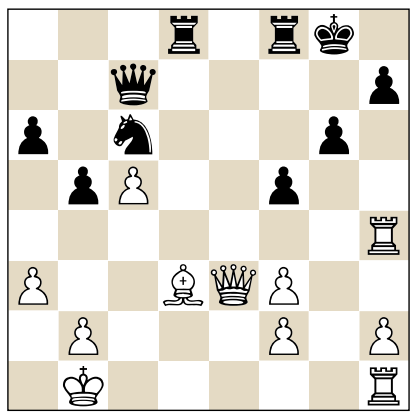
Yes indeed, this is the move when we ask AlphaZero for its reaction after a short thinking time. Simon Williams mentioned in his recent ChessBase DVD on the 5.♗f4 Queen's Gambit Declined that he didn't know why this wasn't played more often, and AlphaZero agrees!

11.♘b5 a6 12.♘c7 e5 13.♖xd5 ♕xc7 14.♕xe4 exf4 15.♖xc5 fxe3 16.fxe3



This is AlphaZero's main line.
Or 16.♗d3 g6, and now:
A) 17.fxe3 ♗e6 18.♘g5 (18.♕h4 was Karjakin's unsuccessful game at Stavanger 2018 against Vishy Anand: 18...♖ae8 19.♗e4 ♕b6 20.♕h6 f5 21.♘g5 ♖f7 22.♗d5 ♗xd5 23.♖xd5 ♕xe3+ 24.♔b1 ♖fe7 and Black was already quite comfortable. Karjakin-Anand, Stavanger 2018 (0-1, 32)) 18...♕e7 19.♕h4 h5 20.♕e4 ♕xc5 21.♘xe6 ♕d6 22.♘xf8 ♔xf8 23.♖d1 ♕xh2 24.♕f4 ♕xf4 25.exf4, with a 58% expected score for White but you would expect the game to end in a draw.
B) 17.♕xe3 b6 18.♖h5 appealed greatly, but AlphaZero felt that Black did not have too much to worry about: 18...♗g4 19.♖h4 ♗xf3 20.gxf3 (20.♕xf3 ♘e5 21.♕g3 ♘xd3+ 22.♕xd3 ♖ad8 23.♕c2 ♕c6 24.♖e4 f5, with a 57% expected score for White) 20...♖ad8 21.♔b1 (21.♖d1 f5 22.c5 b5 23.♗c2 ♖xd1+ 24.♗xd1 f4 25.♕e4 ♔g7 26.♗c2 ♘e5 27.♔b1 ♕xc5 is assessed by AlphaZero as a 55% expected score for White) 21...f5 22.c5 b5.

'Analysing with AlphaZero is a rollercoaster ride.'



It looks a little fraught for Black, but AlphaZero sees no more than a slight advantage for White: 23.♗c2 (23.♖g1 ♖fe8 24.♕h6 ♕g7 25.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 26.♗xf5 ♖e2 27.♖e4 ♖xf2 28.♖e6 ♘d4, with a 54% expected score for White) 23...♖fe8 24.♗b3+ ♔h8 25.♕c3+ ♕g7 26.♗f7 ♖e2 27.♗xg6 ♕xc3 28.bxc3 ♘e7 29.♗f7 ♔g7 30.♗b3 ♖d3 is another spectacular line, with close to a 55% expected score for White.

16...g6 17.♗e2

17.♘d4 ♗d7 18.♖d5 ♘xd4 19.♖xd4 ♗c6 20.♕f4 ♕e7 with a 55% expected score for White: the e3-pawn will be hard to hold.

17...♗e6 18.♕h4 ♖ae8 19.♘g5 f6 20.♘xe6 ♖xe6 21.♖d5 ♖xe3 22.♖hd1 ♖f7 23.♗f1 ♖e5 24.♔b1 ♔g7 25.g3

With a 59% expected score for White.

As you can see, analysing with AlphaZero is a rollercoaster ride. While its play is generally sound and strategical, it is extremely sensitive to the slightest opportunities for active counterplay, which it prosecutes with great energy and purpose. This gives great feedback when trying out ideas against it, especially those involving the arrangement of your pieces on different sets of squares: AlphaZero won't be shy to shout a low evaluation at you if it doesn't like your choices. All-in-all, it's been a great experience analysing with an engine quite unlike any other, and we hope you enjoyed this insight into the brain of an artificial intelligence system that taught itself to play chess. ■

How AlphaZero evaluates

AlphaZero's evaluation is based on how it would expect to do against itself from the current position. It uses a weighted average of all the lines it has seen during its analysis which lets AlphaZero take account of everything going on in the position before giving its final evaluation. We think this is what gives AlphaZero its intuitive feel for positions, allowing it to steer towards positions that are generally promising. In this article we talk about the evaluation as a percentage. An expected score of 70% for White would signify good winning chances and a definite advantage for White.

So Happy Together

In spite of the inevitable absence of the World Champion and his Challenger, the Chess.com Isle of Man International was immensely strong, with six top-10 players and a host of other stars. Seeded 10th, Radek Wojtaszek was the sensation of the 2018 edition, as the Polish GM beat Arkadij Naiditsch in the Armageddon game of a blitz tiebreak, taking home £ 38,000. His wife, Alina Kashlinskaya, added another £ 7,000 to their celebration day by winning the top women's prize. **ADHIBAN BASKARAN** (shared third place) reports.

ALINA L'AMI

Radek Wojtaszek and First Lady Alina Kashlinskaya leave their hotel on the day of the last round. It was going to be a very good day.

Husband and wife take top prizes in Isle of Man

ALINA L'AMI

An impression of Douglas that the Tourist Office will love. On the left the Villa Marina, where the Chess.com Isle of Man International was held.

The Isle of Man is a really nice place to visit, because almost all the hotels overlook the sea. And, oh yes, I am a 'sea' person! In Douglas, the capital, where we played, the Queen's Promenade is perfect both for walkers and runners, i.e. for all kinds of chess players!

A major attraction is the gambling, which generates quite some GNP every year. I came to know about it when the lady at the Immigration counter asked me, 'So, what is the purpose of your visit to the Isle of man?' Feeling too lazy to elaborate, I said, 'Sports', to which she replied, 'Ah, so you are here for gambling!', which completely threw me off! Later, when I mentioned this episode to Surya Ganguly, he said, 'Maybe she has seen your games!' Something I couldn't entirely disagree with.

Tricks

Last year I also played in Isle of Man, and that had been a quite horrific experience, so to tip the balance in my favour, my dad accompanied me this time. One of the other things I changed was to arrive early. Because of that early arrival, Vishy Anand and my dad and me went for lunch in the New Hong Kong Hotel, which also became an instant hit among many other players, who all loved the food there. After the lunch I tried to split the bill in two, but Vishy said, 'Your tricks won't work on me!', and it was the last time I was invited to have a meal with him ☹.

I remember the days when the Isle of Man was a 'normal' Open, but in 2016 they got a new sponsor, the Scheinberg family... and the tournament has never been the same! It has become a must in the calendar of any professional player. The venue is the beautiful Villa Marina, which offers a variety of halls, an analysis room and commentary rooms. I heard a rumour that it has been booked for some other purpose next year, but I really hope they fix this!

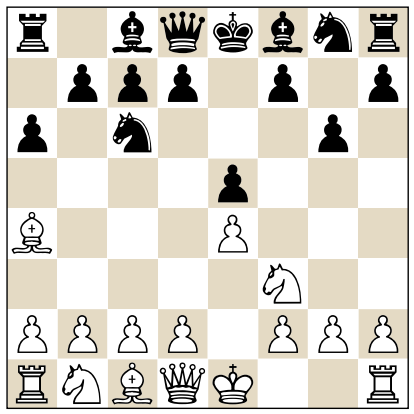
After the event I asked Boris Gelfand, 'What do you think makes the Isle of Man tournament special?' He said, 'Good playing hall, pleasant weather and lots of nice parks and the Queen's Promenade for walks. All these makes it a very nice overall experience!'

Considerable trouble

Opens are always more unpredictable than super-events, which makes them a lot of fun to follow, since the lead changes with every round, with many upsets along the way! The only elite player to maintain a perfect score was Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who was sporting a proud 3/3 after the start, whereas the others did not manage to get through the first three rounds unscathed. Vishy got into considerable trouble against 13-year-old Indian player Raunak Sadhwani.

Raunak Sadhwani
Vishy Anand
Douglas 2018 (1)
Ruy Lopez, Fianchetto Defence Deferred

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 g6



5.0-0

The alternative is 5.c3 ♗g7 6.d4 b5 7.♗b3 exd4!? (it is important to make this exchange with the pawn on d7; we will see why in the main game) 8.cxd4 d6, and now 9.h3 (after 9.0-0, 9...♘ge7!? is the most popular move) 9...♘f6!. This was why ...♘ge7 was delayed. Now the knight is much more actively placed than on its usual square. 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 ♗b7 12.♘bd2 ♘b4 13.♘f1 c5 14.a3 ♘c6

15.d5 ♘d4! 16.♘xd4 cxd4 17.♕xd4 ♘xd5, and Black won a nice game; Hansen-Anand, Batumi Olympiad 2018.

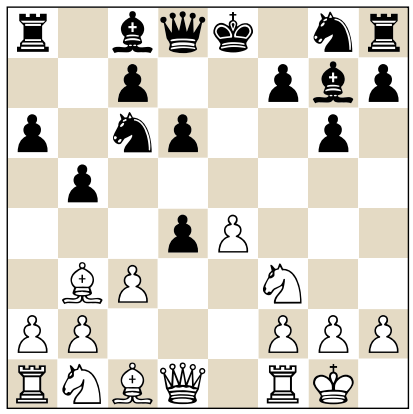
5...♗g7 6.c3 b5 7.♗b3

Compared to the 5.c3 line, White is waiting for ...d6 before going for d4.

7...d6

After 7...♘f6 8.d4 0-0 (8...exd4 9.e5 is bad for Black; or 8...d6 9.dxe5 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 dxe5 11.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 12.♗xf7, with an extra pawn) 9.♘xe5! ♘xe4 10.♗d5, White once again wins a pawn.

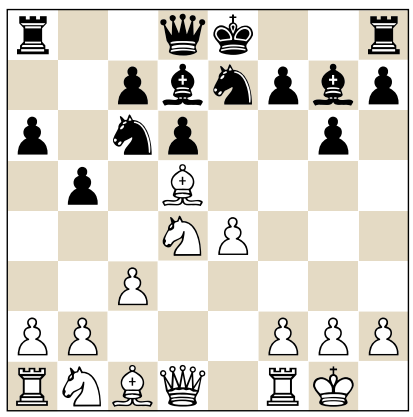
8.d4 exd4



9.♘xd4! The point! White exploits his superior development.

9...♗d7 9...♘ge7 10.♗g5! ♘xd4 (10...f6 11.♗e3 doesn't look inspiring either) 11.cxd4 h6 should be possible, although White is better.

10.♗d5 ♘ge7



11.♗g5! A nasty idea, which Vishy probably underestimated.

11...f6 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.♗xc6+ ♘xc6 14.♗h4 ♕d7 15.a4 ♖b8 16.axb5 axb5 17.♖a6 ♘e7

17...♘e5, followed by ...♘f7 and ...0-0, was the lesser evil.

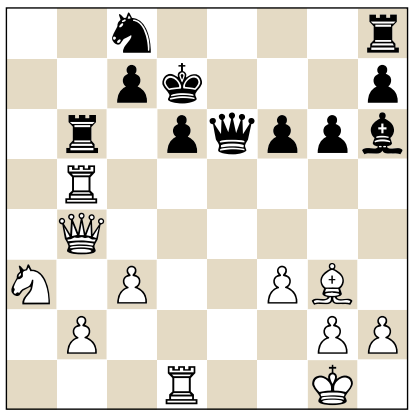
18.♕b3! ♕g4!? 19.♗g3 ♕xe4

MARIA EMELIANOVA

The Legend and the Promise. Vishy Anand had a tough game against 13-year-old Raunak Sadhwani, whom he described as 'ridiculously under-rated'.

If you are going to end up worse anyway, it is good to have at least an extra pawn.

20.♖a7 ♔d7 21.♖d1 ♖b6 22.♘a3 ♘c8 23.f3 ♕e8 24.♖a5 ♕e6 25.♕b4 ♗h6 26.♖xb5



White has regained the pawn with an ongoing initiative... But by a miracle Vishy managed to survive this and even went on to win! (0-1, 77)

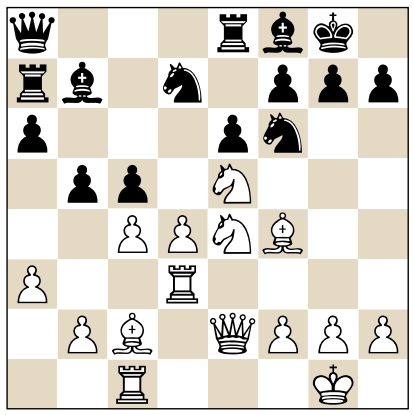
After the game Anand praised his young opponent, rated 2438 against his own 2771, calling him 'ridiculously under-rated'.

600 calories in two hours

One major innovation at this year's event was the heart-rate monitor. If both players agreed, they were supplied with hand-held heart-rate monitors (quite comfortable, I must say). They were checked and followed during the live commentary, so as to have an indication of the changes in the players' heart rate during tense moments. This is how we found out that Mikhail Antipov managed to burn 600 calories in two hours. Who needs running when you can just play chess to burn calories!!

There weren't many upsets in the second round, but there were two fine finishes involving queen sacrifices.

Gujrathi Vidit
Das Debashis
Douglas 2018 (2)

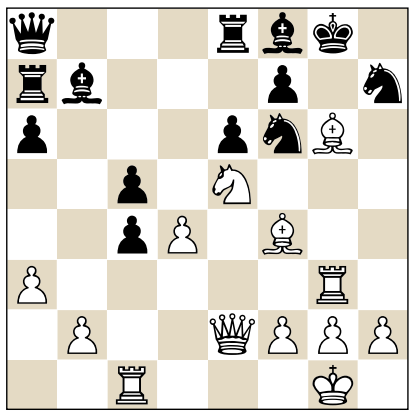


position after 20...c5

Black had been playing pretty passively and this was his first active

move. Unfortunately for him, it was already too late!

21.♘g5! With all the pieces pointing to the kingside, Vidit shows no restraint. **21...bxc4 22.♖g3** Preparing the Greek sac on h7. **22...g6** Hoping to discourage it. **23.♘xh7 ♘xh7 24.♗xg6 ♘df6** Black hopes to give up some material to escape the attack...

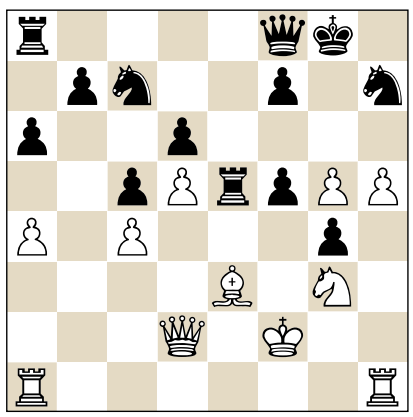


25.♕h5!! How often do you see such a spectacular finish!!

Black resigned in view of 25....♘xh5 26.♗xf7+ ♔h8 27.♖g8. A pretty mate!

I got to witness the next game from close-by, since I was playing on the next board.

Bharathakoti Harsha
S.P. Sethuraman
Douglas 2018 (2)



position after 24...gxf5

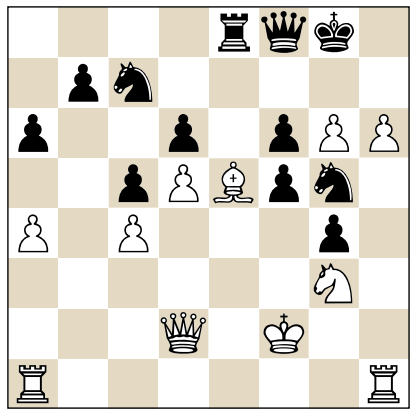
25.♗f4

Thanks to a pawn sacrifice, White had completely changed the scenario from being prey to being the hunter. What followed was just cool.

25...f6 26.g6!

White continues the assault, not distracted by material gains.

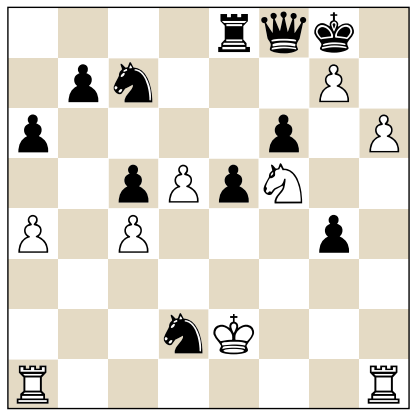
26...♘g5 27.h6 ♖ae8 28.♗xe5



28...dxe5 28...♖xe5 would probably be met by 29.g7 ♕f7 30.♕xg5!, clearing the last obstacle to the advance of the h-pawn.

'Who needs running when you can just play chess to burn calories!!'

29.♘xf5! ♘e4+ 30.♔e2 ♘xd2 31.g7



Black resigned. An epic final position! Games like these reinforce the famous saying that 'Chess is an Art'.

One of the five guys to join MVL in the lead after three rounds was the semi-retired Wang Hao, who managed to win an endgame that many would have probably given up for a draw!

Celeb 64

John Henderson

George C. Scott

George C. Scott was regarded as one of the finest American actors of his generation. He made his name in two memorable military movie performances: the rabid US General Buck Turgidson in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*, and his portrayal of General George S. Patton that clinched him the Best Actor award at the 1971 Oscars (which, typically for hellraiser Scott, he declined).

Many wondered how film director Stanley Kubrick managed to coax out of his notoriously difficult co-star such an over-the-top performance as the bomb-loving general in the 1964 Cold War satire. It turned out to be Scott and Kubrick's mutual love of chess.

The two became heavily involved in a lengthy series of chess matches on the set, and would settle arguments about creative differences over who won at the chessboard.

Kubrick often won, and the photos taken of their chess duels are seen by many as some of the most iconic shots of Hollywood legends playing chess.

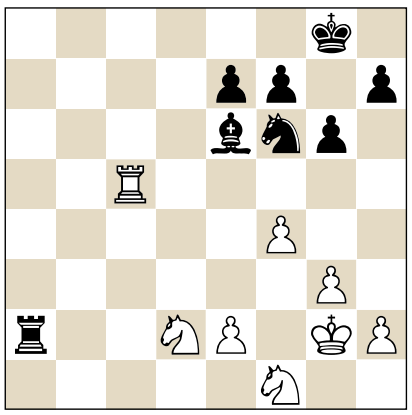
Scott also often played chess with his fellow stars between takes, and the list includes Paul Newman in *The Hustler*, Susannah York in *Jane Eyre*, Timothy Hutton in *Taps*, and Marlon Brando in *The Formula*.

The actor also revelled in the 1980 remake of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, that features a long series of chess scenes in the movie, where he chose all the master games shown. ■

MARIA EMELIANOVA

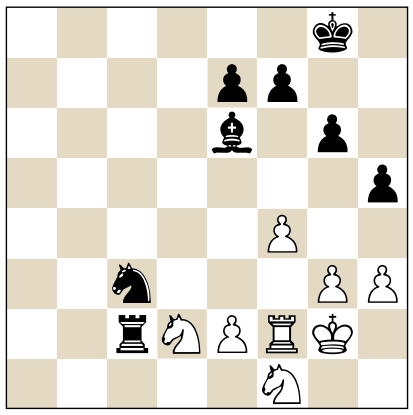
Wang Hao may be semi-retired, but he remains unusually gifted. A wizard, who can win an endgame that many would have probably given up for a draw.

Alexander Donchenko
Wang Hao
Douglas 2018 (3)

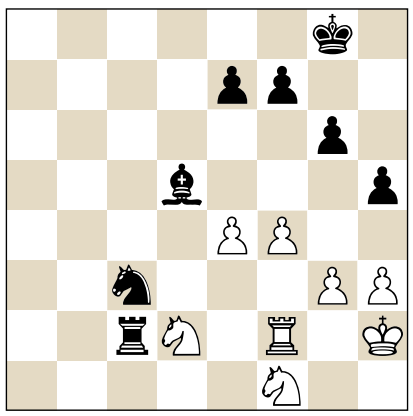


position after 29...♖xa2

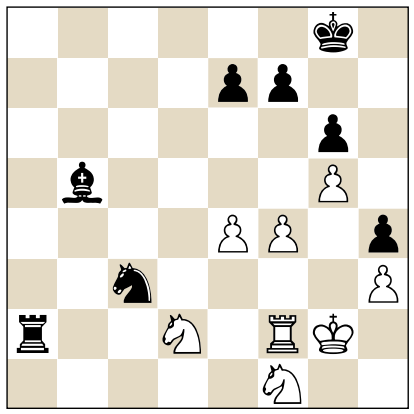
30.h3 Creating an unnecessary target. This casual pawn move makes defending quite difficult.
After 30.♖c3!?, the idea is to put the rook on d4, followed by ♘e3, and White protects everything.
30...h5! 31.♖c3 ♘d5 32.♖f3
After 32.♖d3 h4!? was interesting, weakening White's pawn structure.
32...♖c2
Now White will be unable to play ♔f2 in view of ...h3.
33.♖f2 ♘c3



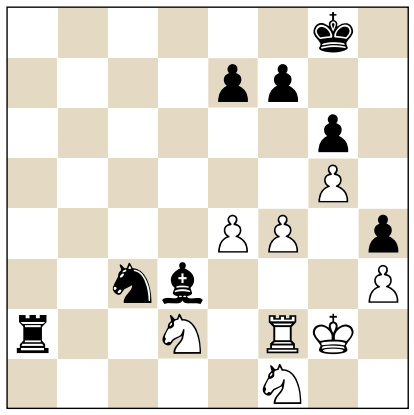
It is amazing how much pressure Black can generate with so few pieces.
34.♔h2 ♗d5 Threatening to win the rook with 35...♘d1. **35.e4**
White was probably counting on this tactical trick to bail out.



35...♗c6!
Not so fast! 35...♘xe4 36.♘xe4 ♗xe4 37.♖xc2 ♗xc2 38.h4 should be an easy draw, since White will continue to play on the dark squares.
36.g4 h4!
Now the same endgame after ...♘xe4 will be winning, thanks to the fixed pawn on h3.
37.♘e3 ♖a2 38.g5
It might have been better to play 38.e5 ♘b1 39.♘ef1 ♗b5 40.♔g2, and Black just about manages to survive...
38...♘b1 39.♘ef1 ♘c3 40.♘e3 ♘b1 41.♘ef1 ♗b5 42.♔g2 ♘c3



43.♘e3
The alternative was 43.♔f3 ♗xf1 44.♘xf1 ♖xf2+ 45.♔xf2 ♘xe4+. Knight endings are very much like pawn endings, so an extra pawn should usually guarantee victory.
43...♗e2 44.♘ef1 ♗d3

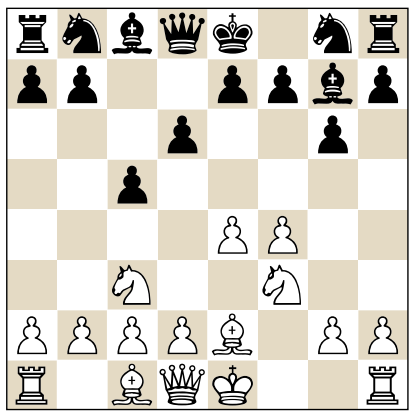


Finally, Black's superior activity nets him a pawn.
45.♘e3 45.e5 ♘d1 46.♖f3 ♗e4 was the amusing point.
45...♘xe4 46.♘xe4 ♗xe4+
And Wang Hao managed to convert the extra pawn.

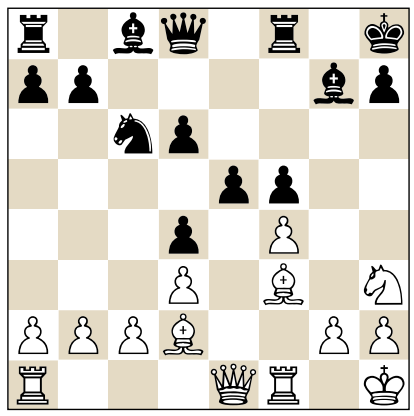
Brand-new FIDE vice-president Nigel Short had decided to take some time off from his political duties by playing in the Isle of Man. It was a nice feeling to see a legend of the previous era hold his own against the current top players!

Nigel Short
Sergey Karjakin
Douglas 2018 (4)
Sicilian Defence, Grand Prix Attack

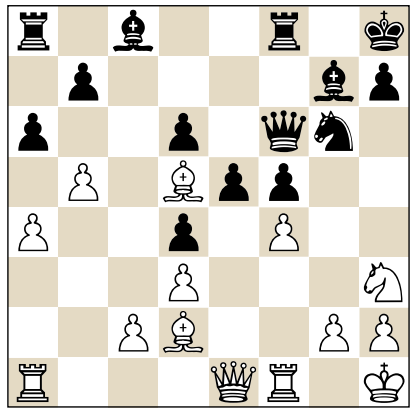
Little did Short know that after Karjakin he would continue to fight against the very strong in the following rounds, which later led to an epic tweet: 'It feels like Altibox at IoM. Playing Sergey Karjakin, Alexander Grischuk, Wesley So and Lev Aronian in successive rounds.'
1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 d6 3.f4 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗e2!?



Short is mixing ideas of many systems. This could be called the Turbo-Charged Grand Prix Attack! (he likes to use that word when he mixes different concepts to create new openings).
5...♘c6 6.0-0 e6
The usual way of development for Black, which completely stymies White's assault on the kingside.
7.♕e1 ♘ge7 8.♔h1!? I wonder if there was any point behind delaying d3. 8.d3 should also lead to the same.
8...♘d4 9.♘xd4 cxd4 10.♘d1 0-0 11.d3 f5 12.♗d2 ♘c6 13.♘f2 e5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♗f3 ♔h8 16.♘h3!?
I like White's position here, although if the king was on g1, the manoeuvre ♘h1-g3-h5 would look interesting.



16...♕f6 17.b4
Expanding the horizon. Entertaining was 17.fxe5 dxe5 18.♘g5 h6 19.♕h4 ♗e6 20.♕h3 ♗g8 21.g4!?, with nasty complications that should suit White.
17...a6 18.a4 ♘e7 19.b5 ♘g6 20.♗d5



20...♘e7 21.♗f3 ♘g6 22.♗d5 ♘e7 23.♗f3 Draw. I guess on a different day, Short wouldn't have minded continuing the game.

Something we don't know?

I thought I would try to cover interesting games from every round, but I got some doubts when we reached Round 5. First Kramnik, then Anand and Wojtaszek and then Leko took a bye, which definitely didn't go unnoticed and led to a hilarious tweet by twitter guru Anish Giri (showing the list of unpaired players and asking: 'Do they know something we don't?!).

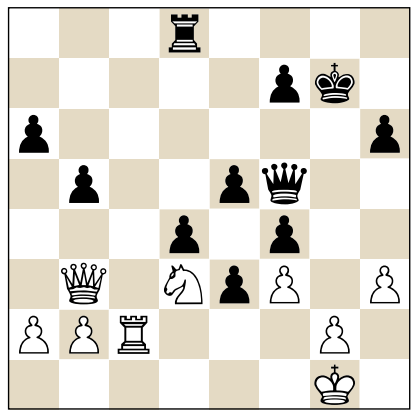
Personally, I don't mind rest days when they are part of a top class event (I'm pretending that I am used to playing such events ☺). You rest and rejuvenate for the more important later rounds... But taking a bye for half a point while the rest are playing? I know this option is in the rules in Isle of Man, but somehow I can't really grasp it. Maybe it's just me... In fact, it was possible to take a bye until Round 8, which I feel is a bit too much.

'But taking a bye for half a point while the rest are playing? Somehow I can't really grasp it.'

Battle madness

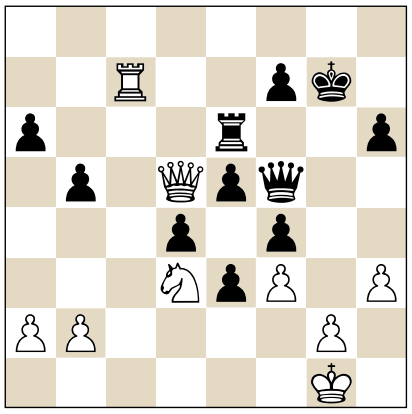
There were many stars in the Isle of Man, but only one guy managed to stay undefeated till the end of the tale: Jeffery Xiong, who succeeded in balancing the dynamic and positional aspects of the game. The young American is definitely someone to watch out for in the future! Let's take a look at how he took down one of the major forces of the new generation.

Richard Rapport
Jeffery Xiong
Douglas 2018 (5)



position after 32...♔g7

Rapport was playing a great game and cruising smoothly towards a win. The black pawns are completely blockaded.
33.♖c7 ♖e8 34.♕d5! ♖e6



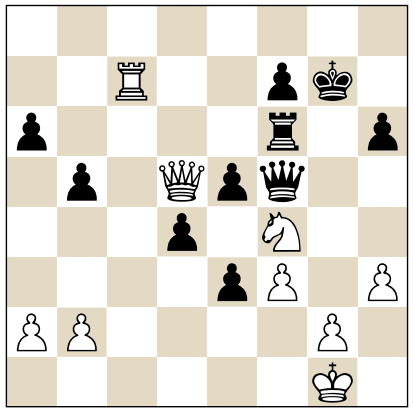
35.♘xf4

Tempting, but a big mistake. As Nimzowitsch would say, 'Never remove your blockader'!

Correct was 35.h4!. The point is that Black is in zugzwang and can't move any of his pieces: 35...♖f6 (35...h5 36.♘c5!, followed by ♘e4-g5; or 35...a5 36.♕xb5, and White just wins another pawn) 36.♕e4! (now this works) 36...♕xe4 37.fxe4 ♖e6 38.h5!, and the king is completely out of the game.

The immediate 35.♕e4 looks natural, but it is premature, since it will be met by 35...♕xe4 36.fxe4 ♔g6, and Black is back in the game.

35...♖f6!



A simple rejoinder. Now the pawns become very dangerous.

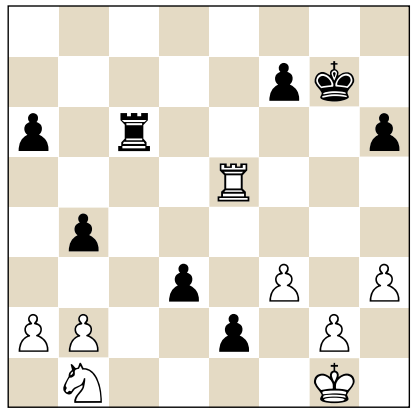
36.♘e2 d3 37.♘c3

37.♘g3 ♕g5 38.♘e4 e2 39.♔f2! was still holding the balance.

37...♖g6 38.♖e7 b4 39.♘b1

39.♖xe5 ♕xh3 is equally hopeless.

39...e2 40.♕xe5+ ♕xe5 41.♖xe5 ♖c6



Quite a turn of events. White resigned.

Unfortunately for Xiong, this was his last victory, since he drew the remaining games to finish shared third.

Knowledge is power

One of the most talked-about endgames in Round 5 was a two knights vs lone pawn ending, in which the experienced Sergey Karjakin represented the former and young Sam Sevian the latter.

Richard Forster / Michael Negele / Raj Tischbierek (eds.)

EMANUEL LASKER

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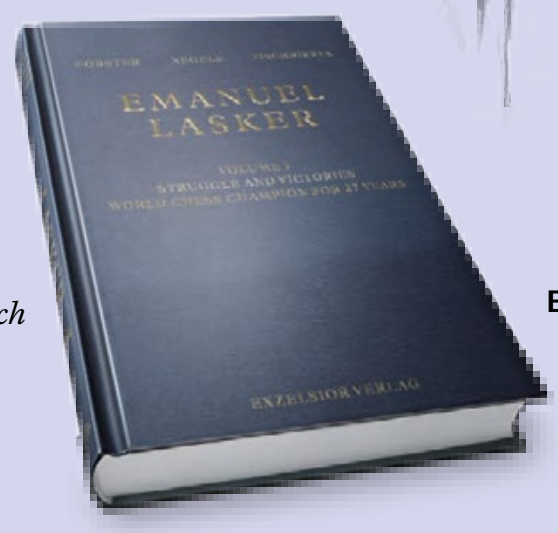

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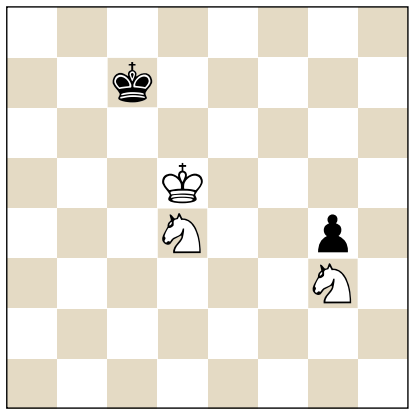
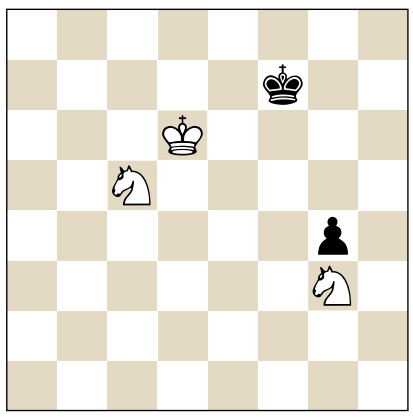
Sergey Karjakin
Samuel Sevian
Douglas 2018 (5)

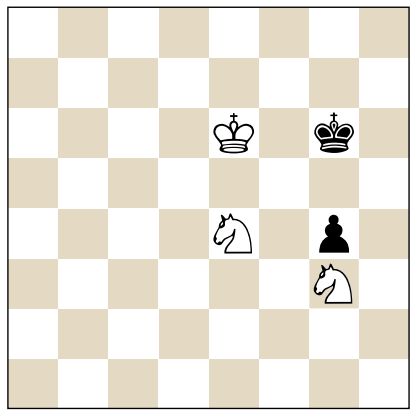


position after 78.♘d4

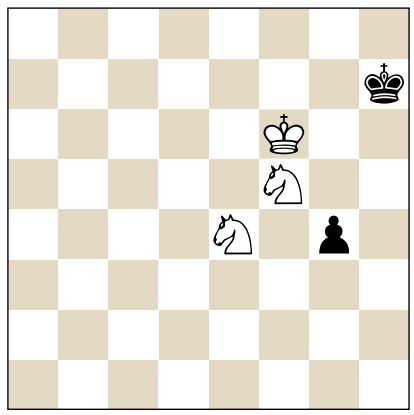
It had been a theoretical draw for quite some time, but here Sevian started to drift into the kill zone...
78...♔d7?! Going into the wrong direction!
79.♘e6 ♔e7
It still wasn't too late for 79...♔c8! and returning the king to its rightful place on the queenside far away from the knight, when 80.♔c6 ♔b8 is an easy draw.
80.♘c5 ♔f7
Once again it was still possible to backtrack: 80...♔d8 81.♔c6 ♔c8 82.♘d7 ♔d8 is still alright.
81.♔d6



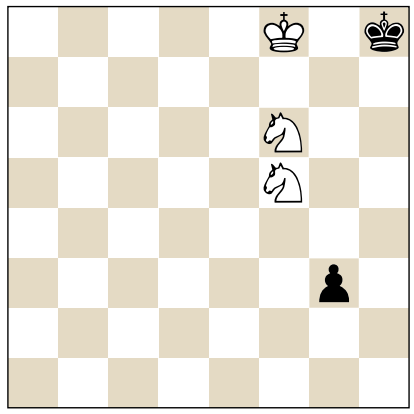
81...♔f6?? After this the tablebases announce a mate in 12 (just like in the olden days ☺). 81...♔e8 was Black's last chance: 82.♘e6!? ♔f7 83.♘d4 ♔e8 84.♘c6, when White will make progress, but it is only a draw.
82.♘ce4+! The only move.
82...♔f7 83.♔d7 ♔f8 84.♘d6 ♔g7 85.♔e6 ♔g6 86.♘de4!



This is the problem. The g3-knight also participates in restricting the king, something Black should never have allowed.
86...♔g7 87.♔e7 ♔g8
After 87...♔g6 88.♔f8 ♔h7 89.♔f7 ♔h6 90.♔f6 ♔h7 91.♘f5, we reach the game position.
88.♔f6 ♔h7 89.♘f5!



Time to finally let go of your materialistic desires!
89...♔g8 89...g3 90.♔f7! g2 91.♘g5+! (closing the g-file) 91...♔h8 92.♘h4 g1♕ 93.♘g6 mate.
90.♔e7 g3 91.♘f6+ ♔h8 92.♔f8



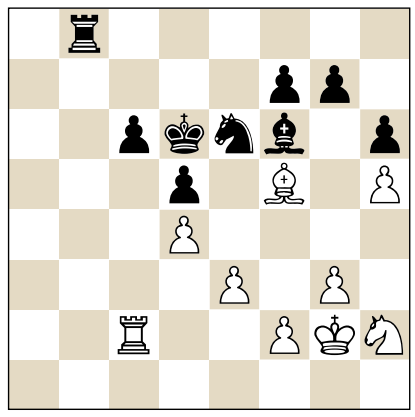
And in view of 92...g2 93.♘d6, and mate next move, Black resigned. Good to know such endgame lessons!

Endgame experts

In Round 6, in a clash between two of the leaders (Abhijeet Gupta was third at that point), Jeffery Xiong had a great opportunity to put a half-point distance between him and the pack in the endgame of his encounter with Wang Hao.

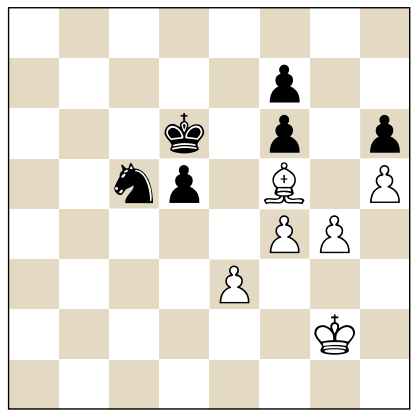
This endgame will probably be researched in considerable depth by endgame experts.

Jeffery Xiong
Wang Hao
Douglas 2018 (6)



position after 37...♖xb8

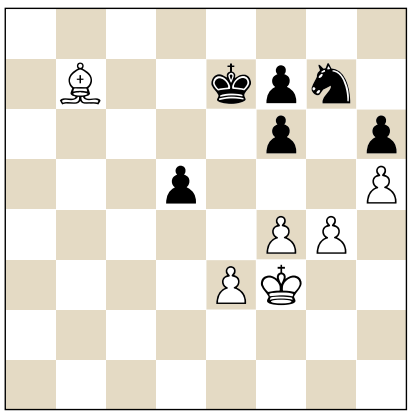
Xiong had been pushing hard for a win, but Wang Hao defends coolly.
38.♘g4 ♖c8!
Preparing ...c5 and a liquidation to a draw.
39.♖a2 c5 40.♖a6+ ♖c6 41.dxc5+ ♘xc5 42.♖xc6+ ♔xc6 43.♘xf6 gxf6 44.f4 ♔d6 45.g4



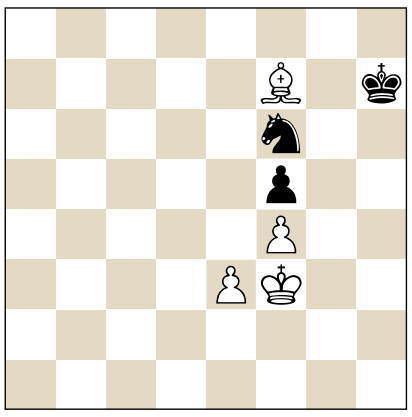
At first glance, this endgame looked very dangerous for Black.
45...♘e6 46.♔f3 ♘g7
46...♔e7 is also sufficient for a draw.
47.♗c8 ♔e7 48.♗b7

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Kazakhstani GM Rinat Jumabaev had to experience what can happen when Alexander Grischuk switches to aggression mode.



48...f5 48...♔e6 is also possible: 49.g5 fxg5 50.fxg5 ♘xh5 51.gxh6 ♔f6 52.♔g4 ♔g6 53.h7 ♘f6+!, and Black escapes due to this trick.
49.g5 ♘xh5 50.gxh6 ♔f6 51.♗xd5 ♔g6 52.h7 ♔xh7 53.♗xf7 ♘f6

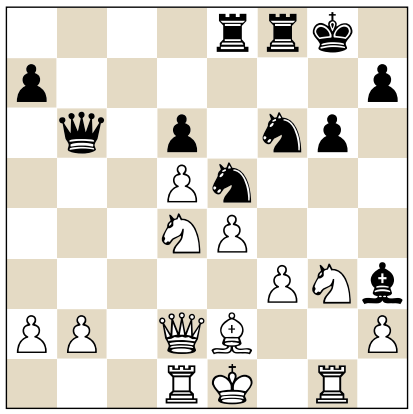


Draw. White can't do anything with the extra pawn, since the black king will just continue to lurk on f6 and let the knight roam free ☺.

Stunning and inhuman

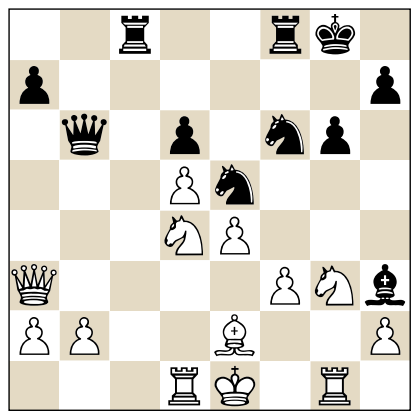
In that same round, MVL, our early leader, managed to bounce back with a win in a complicated game against Rinat Jumabayev, a GM from Kazakhstan.

Rinat Jumabayev
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Douglas 2018 (6)

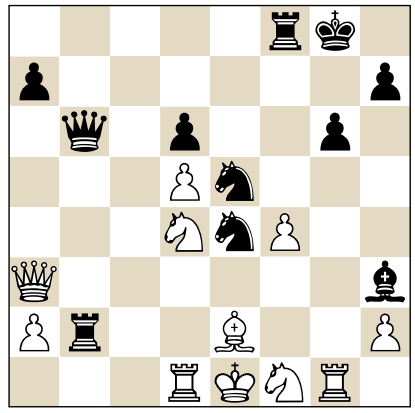


position after 30...♖ce8

31.♕c3 The best chance here was the stunning and inhuman 31.♖f1! (preparing ♖f2) 31...♗xf1 32.♔xf1, with a large advantage due to the weak e6-square.
31...♖c8 32.♕a3



32...♖c2!
A cool resource by MVL. Once again the tables have been turned and White only has one way to escape.
33.f4 Not this one, but 33.b4!, just holding on to his material advantage. Apparently, Black has no clear way to crash through.
33...♖xb2 34.♘f1 After 34.fxe5, 34...dxe5 is winning.
34...♘xe4

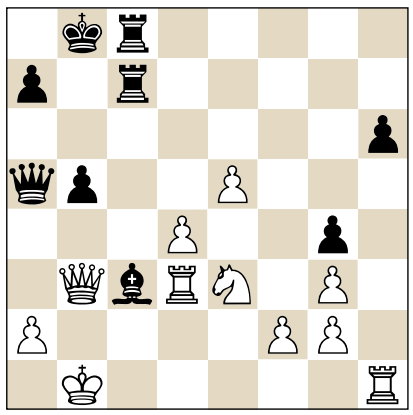


Now everything falls apart.
35.fxe5 dxe5 36.♘g3 exd4
White resigned.

Kramnik's love of art

One of my favourite books from the classical period was Vladimir Kramnik's *My Life and Games*, a highly informative read in which every game starts with a quote. If Kramnik decides to write another book, I wonder what quote would introduce the following game?

Vladimir Kramnik
Erwin l'Ami
Douglas 2018 (6)



position after 27...♖hc8

Kramnik has come out of the opening clearly commanding the position. The rest is just Art!

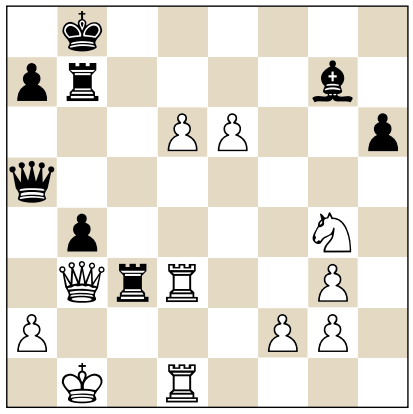
28.♖hd1

Bring all your pieces into play!

28...b4 29.e6

Passed pawns must be pushed!

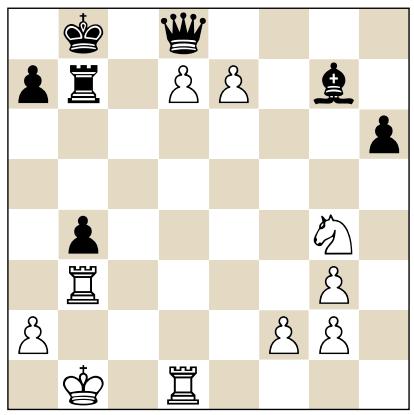
29...♖b7 30.d5 ♗f6 31.♘xg4 ♗g7 32.d6 ♖c3



33.d7!

Not getting distracted from the main objective of queening the pawns.

33...♖xb3+ 34.♖xb3 ♕d8 35.e7

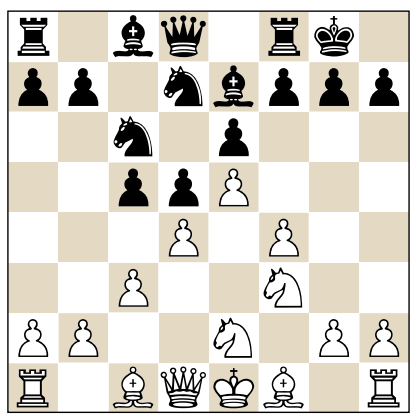


Such a pretty finale!

Ever since his triumph in the FIDE GP series, Alexander Grischuk has shown that he can be solid and unbeatable whenever he wants to. The Isle of Man was another event in which he followed the same pattern, although that didn't stop him from going for aggressive lines if the situation demanded it!

Alexander Grischuk
Rinat Jumabayev
Douglas 2018 (7)
French Defence, Steinitz Variation

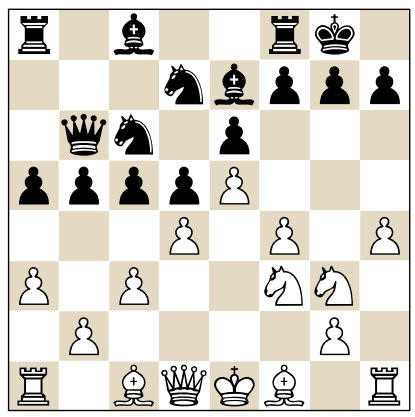
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♘e2 ♗e7 8.c3 0-0



9.h4!? The signal to attack! **9...b5 10.a3!** It's always useful to include some prophylaxis and make Black's job of creating counterplay more difficult.

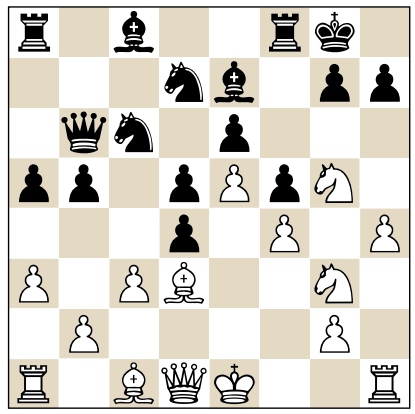
10...a5! 11.♘g3 Maybe 11.♘g5!? was more to the point: 11...cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.cxd4 h6 14.♕d3 f5 15.♘xe6, and now the counter-blow 15...♘xe5! is very typical of the French. Black is completely OK.

11...♕b6!



Not fearing ghosts and creating his own counterplay.

12.♗d3 f5 13.♘g5 In for a penny, in for a pound! **13...cxd4**



14.♘xe6

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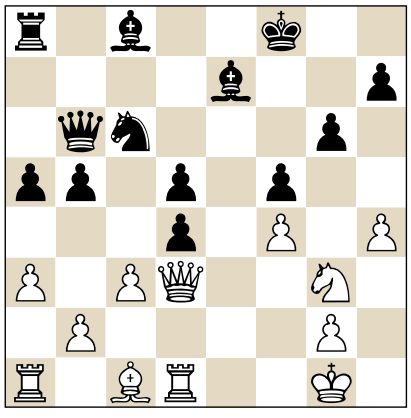
The most natural 14.♕h5!? h6 15.♕g6 (15.♘xe6 will again be met by 15...♘dxe5!) 15...hxg5 16.hxg5 ♘cxe5 17.fxe5 ♘xe5 18.♕h7+ ♔f7 19.♗e2 ♔e8 20.♕xg7 ♗d6 21.♘h5 was dangerous for both sides.

14...♘dxe5! 15.♘xf8 ♘xd3+ 16.♕xd3 ♔xf8 17.0-0 g6 18.♖d1



18...b4 After 18...♗a6! White is the player who has to think about equalizing. **19.axb4 ♗a6 20.♕f3 axb4 21.♔h2** And Grischuk managed to convert (1-0, 42).

Swiss expert

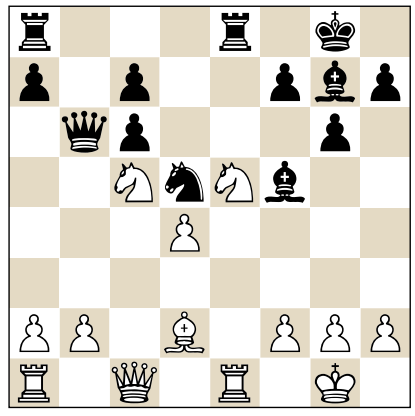
As to the other favourites for final victory, Hikaru Nakamura has proven himself to be very well suited for the Swiss format, as we have seen several times in, for instance, Gibraltar. Here, however, there was a guy who blocked his way to another tournament victory.

Arkadij Naiditsch
Hikaru Nakamura
Douglas 2018 (8)
Ruy Lopez, Smyslov Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.d4 exd4 5.c3 ♘ge7

5...dxc3 6.♘xc3 is too dangerous due to White's lead in development and the weak dark squares in Black's camp.

6.cxd4 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.0-0 ♗g7 9.♗xc6+ bxc6 10.♗g5 ♕d6 11.♖e1+ ♗e6 12.♘bd2 0-0 13.♘e4 ♕b4 14.♕c1 ♖fe8 15.♗d2 ♕b6 16.♘c5 ♗f5 17.♘e5



17...♖ad8?! So far it's all still theory. But 17...♖e7! was better, bringing the other rook to e8, with good chances to equalize. **18.h3!** The first new move, and quite a strong novelty! I wonder what Naka had missed in his prep. Maybe he hadn't expected to reach this position at all. **18...♘f6 19.♘b3** The greedy approach. 19.♕c4! was very strong, and it is hard to give Black good advice: 19...♘d5 20.b3, and White is clearly better. **19...♖d5 20.♘xc6 ♖xe1+ 21.♗xe1 ♗f8**

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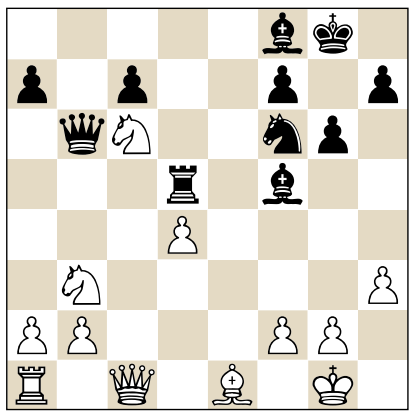
MARIA EMELIANOVA

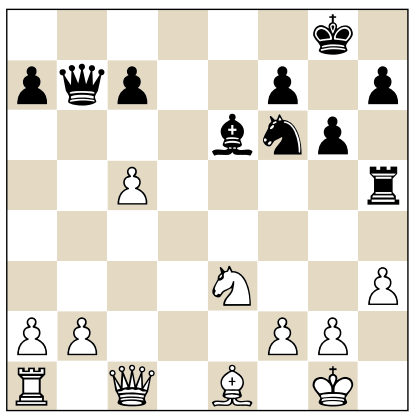
As Arkadij Naiditsch thinks about his next move, 46.♕c6, which will force his opponent's resignation, Hikaru Nakamura has no doubts about what is coming.



At least the black pieces look more alive here.

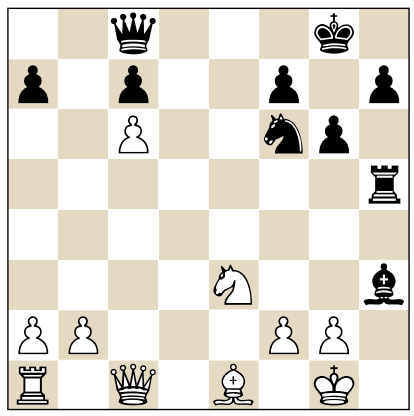
22.♘e5 ♗e6 23.♘c4 ♕b7 24.♘e3!? An interesting manoeuvre to safeguard the g2 spot.

24...♖h5 25.♘c5 ♗xc5 26.dxc5



26...♗xh3 Knowing that he might lose if he didn't try something, Naka decides to go for a speculative piece sacrifice.

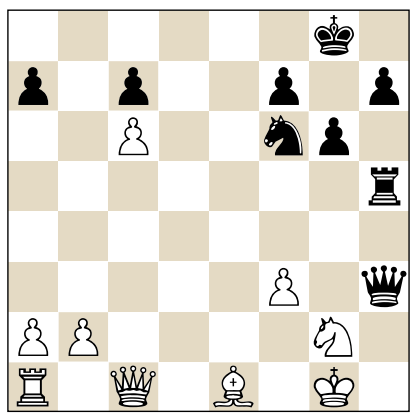
27.c6! A useful inclusion. **27...♕c8**



28.f3!? Naiditsch has let go of his greediness and focuses on controlling the kingside and eventually triumphing on the a1-h8 diagonal.

28...♗xg2 28...♗e6 was the more stubborn defence: 29.♗c3 ♘d5 30.♘xd5 ♖xd5, and White still has to prove his superiority.

29.♘xg2 ♕h3

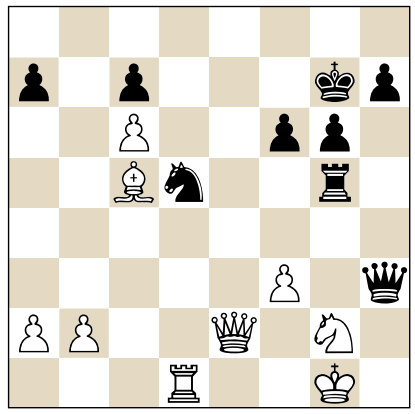


30.♗c3 Too soft. Best was 30.♕f4! ♕h1+ 31.♔f2, winning: 31...♖f5 32.♕h4. But this is not an easy line to see.

30...♘d5 Suddenly, Black is having enough compensation for the pawn.

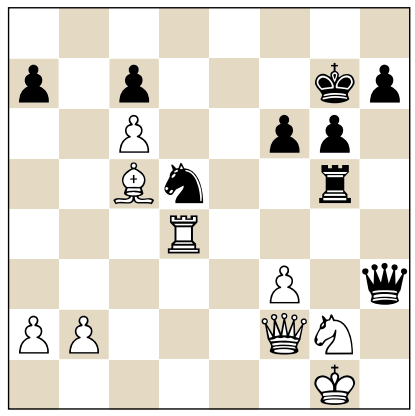
31.♗d4 f6 32.♕e1 ♔f7 33.♖d1 ♖g5 If Black had continued 33...♕xf3, Naka's sacrifice would have worked wonders!

34.♕e2 ♔g7 35.♗c5



35...♖e5 I guess both players were in time-trouble; otherwise it would be hard to explain why both players missed 35...♘f4, which was winning for Black!: 36.♖d7+ (36.♕e7+ ♔h6 37.♕f8+ ♔h5 is nothing) 36...♕xd7 37.cxd7 ♘xe2+ 38.♔f2 ♖d5 39.♔xe2 a6! (39...♖xd7 40.♗xa7 was the line Naka had seen and rejected), and Black should win this endgame. In the post-game interview, Naiditsch mentioned that he had seen this far in his horror after having played 35.♗c5.

36.♕f2 ♖g5 37.♖d4



Now it's over.

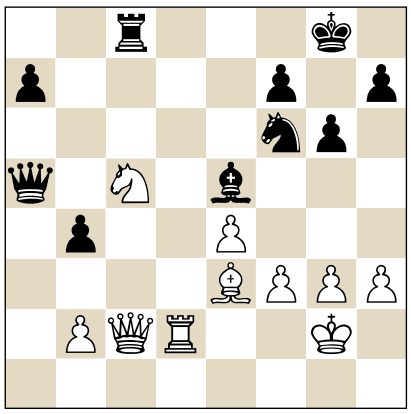
37...♕e6 38.♖e4 ♕xc6 39.♕d4 a5 40.a3 h5 41.♔h2 ♔h7 42.♕c4 ♕b7 43.♖e7+ ♔h8 44.♗d4 ♖f5 45.♖d7 ♕b8 46.♕c6

Black resigned.

Preview of a promise

Earlier this year, Vincent Keymer became known to the world due to his demolition of the entire field in the Grenke Open, a win that earned him a spot in the Grenke Classic next year. I am very excited to see how the young German, now 13 years old, will fight against the best. One preview could be the following game he played in the Isle of Man.

Vincent Keymer
Boris Gelfand
Douglas 2018 (8)



position after 34.♗e3

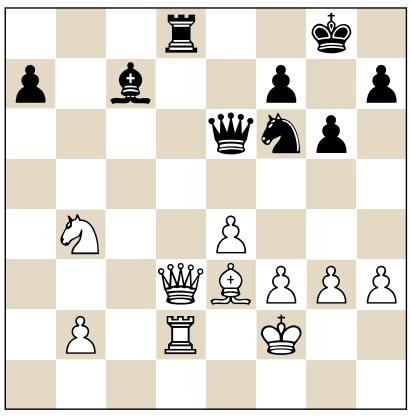
So far things had been going decently for Gelfand in this game.

34...♕c7 The first error. The counter-intuitive 34...♕b6! would have preserved the balance.

35.♕d3! Tactically protecting g3.

35...♕c6 35...♗xg3 loses to 36.♘a6 ♕e5 37.♗d4. A cute tactic.

36.♔f2 ♗c7 37.♘a6 ♖d8 37...♗a5 was fine. **38.♘xb4! ♕e6**



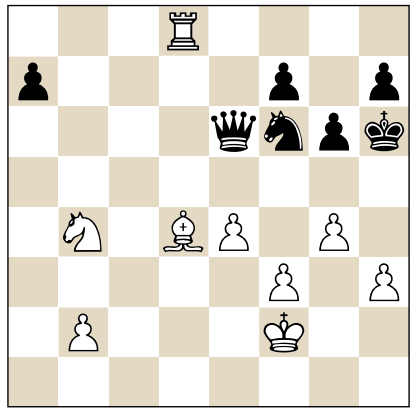
39.♕xd8+!

This queen sacrifice was very impressive and one of the reasons why I wanted to show this game.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

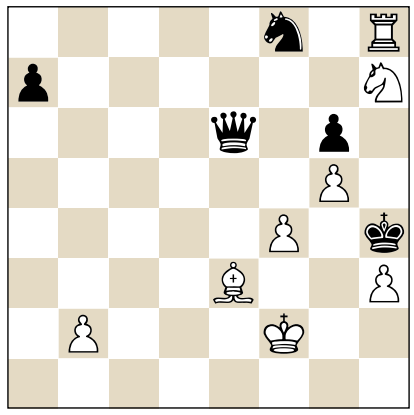
Another landmark in the young career of Vincent Keymer. With a nice finish the 13-year-old German defeated Boris Gelfand.

39...♗xd8 40.♖xd8+ ♔g7 41.♗d4 ♔h6 42.g4!



Black is unable to defend against the dark-square demolition.

42...♘d7 43.♘d5 f5 44.♖h8 fxe4 45.f4! ♘f8 46.g5+ ♔h5 47.♘f6+ ♔h4 48.♘xh7 e3+ 49.♗xe3

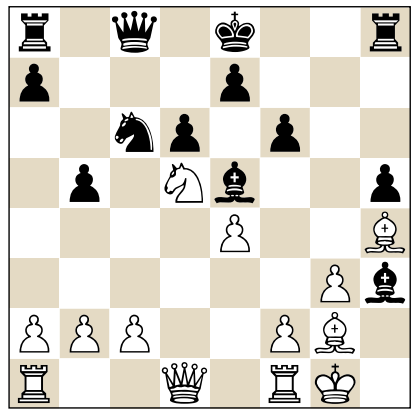


A nice finish. Black resigned.

Brutal attack

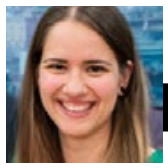
Before we turn to the winners, let's look at one of the games from the final round. We started off with beautiful games and let's end with one. This would be my penance for including Erwin l'Ami's fiasco against Kramnik. This was the Dutchman's game against Simon Williams.

Erwin l'Ami
Simon Williams
Douglas 2018 (9)



position after 16...♗xh3

Although Erwin l'Ami had started off with the modest g3 system against the Najdorf, Simon Williams's provocative play must have evoked



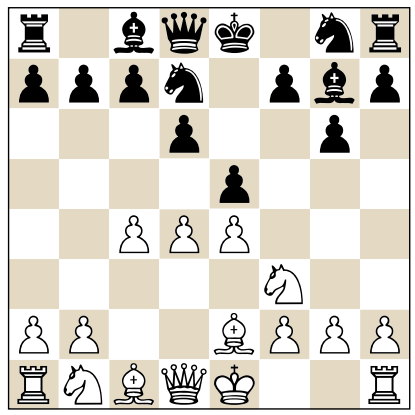
NOTES BY
Alina Kashlinskaya

Alina Kashlinskaya
Samuel Sevian
Douglas 2018 (9)
Modern Defence, Averbakh System

This game was played on my birthday. I knew that statistically the results of such games are not very positive for those who become older that day, so I played with no pressure. If something went wrong I wouldn't be the first and probably not the last player to lose a game on their birthday.

1.d4 d6 I was surprised by my opponent's opening choice. He has never played 1...d6 or any other kind of KID structure.

2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.e4 ♘d7 5.♗e2 e5



6.0-0

Still inviting Black to the KID system with ... ♘bd7 after 6...♘gf6, but Black decided to put the knight on h6. 6.♘c3 ♘h6 was also possible, with h4 ideas, but I didn't feel like playing too aggressively in this particular game.

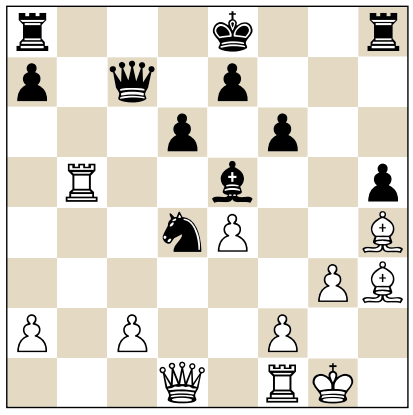
6...♘h6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.h3

something inside him, and the rest is history...

17.♘c7+!

Starting off with the simple theme of overloading.

17...♕xc7 18.♗xh3 ♗xb2 19.♖b1 ♗e5 20.♖xb5 ♘d4



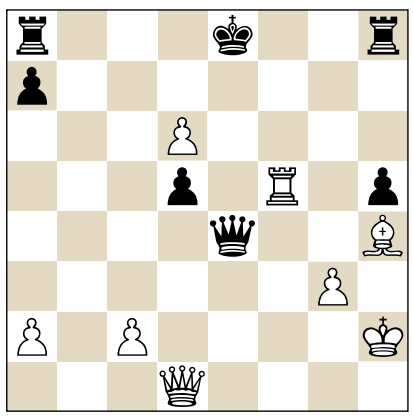
21.♖d5!

A strong outpost for the rook.

21...♕c3 22.f4!

Attack is all about momentum. Here Erwin probably already planned the sacrifice of the d5-rook!

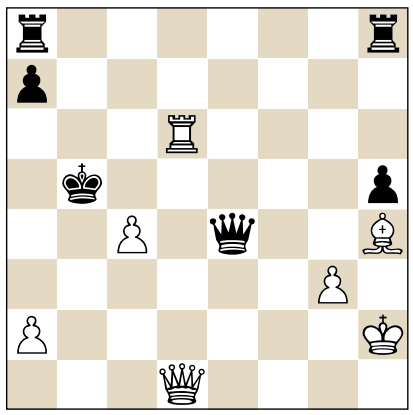
22...e6 23.fxe5 exd5 24.exd6 f5 25.♗xf5 ♘xf5 26.♖xf5 ♕e3+ 27.♔h2 ♕xe4



28.d7+!

Opening up the king even further.

28...♔xd7 29.♖xd5+ ♔c6 30.♖d6+ ♔b5 31.c4+!



Continuing the same policy.

31...♕xc4 32.a4+ ♔a5 33.♗g5!

Deploy all your pieces is one of the golden rules!

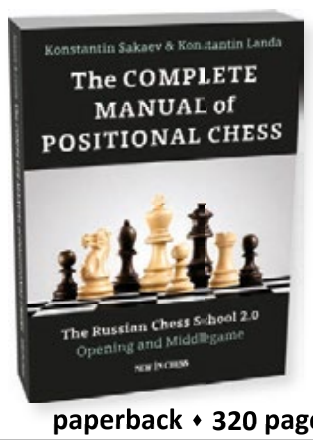
33...♖hb8 34.♗d2+ ♖b4 35.♗xb4+ ♕xb4 36.♕d5+ ♕b5 37.♕xb5

Mate. One of the brutal attacks to be seen in IoM.

More than the wife of

As in Gibraltar, there was a special prize for the best woman. This prize was won by one of the biggest finds of the 2018 edition of the Isle of Man tournament, Alina Kashlinskaya. Rated 2447, the Russian IM drew against Giri and Kramnik and scored two wins against 2600 players. And she is the wife of Radek Wojtaszek, who also ended the tournament on a high.

Alina's flashy final-round victory against Sam Sevian (2634) was easily one of my favourites from the event. Here is that game with her own notes.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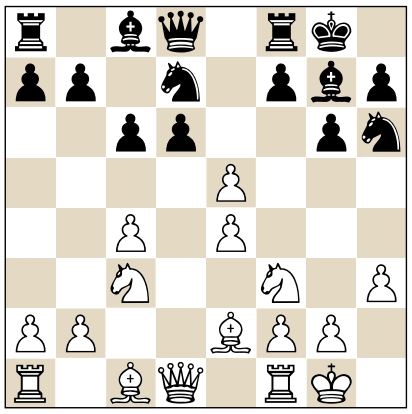
I wanted to continue solidly with all my pieces developed, and decided on another plan connected with h3-♗e3. Mostly White plays 8.♖b1, with the standard b4 plan, to gain space on the queenside.

8...c6 Here I needed to decide what to do with the pawn structure in the centre. Computers are almost always happy here with structures after d5, but they simply overestimate White's chances. I thought that after d5 Black's play would be much easier, since he would try to play ...f5 at some point and benefit from the knight being on h6 instead of f6. I decided that taking on e5 would give me a more comfortable position.

9.dxe5

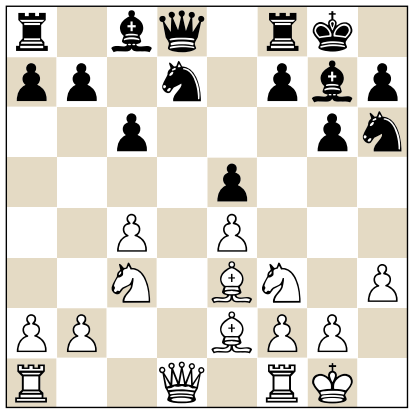


9...dxe5 After 9...♘xe5, I was planning to play 10.♘d4, and I considered this position with the knight on h6 to be a better version of the KID with ...♘bd7, but it turns out that Black actually has strong counterplay thanks to that knight! 10...♕h4!, with the idea of ...f5 or ...♗xh3 at some point, e.g. 11.♗e3 (or 11.f4 ♗xh3! 12.fxe5 ♕g3 13.♖f2 ♗xe5 14.♔f1 ♕h2, with two pawns for the piece and a scary attack) 11...♗xh3! 12.gxh3 ♕xh3 13.♗f3 ♘xc4 14.♗g2 ♕h4, with an unclear position.

10.♗e3?!

This is inaccurate, since after 10...f5!, White would have to answer the reasonable question: 'What is the ♗e3 doing?'

Maybe 10.b4 was more accurate: 10...f5 (White is not scared of 10...a5 11.b5!). Here at least Black is not threatening ...f4, with tempo.

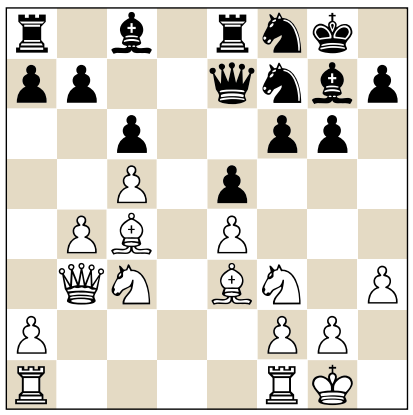


10...f6?!

This is too meek, since it gives me time to develop all my pieces and control Black's counterplay.

As said, 10...f5 was the move I considered best for Black, and I wasn't sure how to react. Since I didn't want to allow 11...f4, I would most likely go for 11.exf5 gxf5 12.♘g5 ♕e7 13.f4, with counterplay.

11.c5 ♘f7 12.♗c4 ♕e7 13.b4 ♖e8 14.♕b3 ♘f8

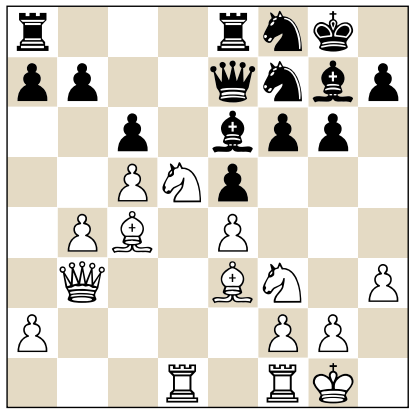


So far, all White's moves were so natural that I didn't even consider other possibilities till now. I spent 10 to 15 minutes here, unable to decide which rook to put on d1. The point is that Black will probably go ...♗e6, trying to create space for his pieces, and I already saw the ideas connected with ♘d5 and was trying to determine which rook would be better on d1 in these lines. And the funny thing is that in some lines my rook on f1 was hanging, but somehow my intuition was telling me that I should play ♖ad1 ☺.

15.♖ad1 ♗e6

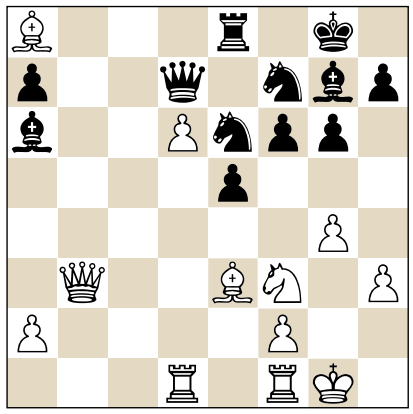
After 15...♘e6 I wanted to have 16.♖fe1. That was one of the reasons why I decided to play ♖ad1.

16.♘d5!



Just couldn't resist playing this!

16...cxd5 17.exd5 ♗f5 18.g4 ♗e4 The main move I had to calculate was 18...♗c8. The line I saw before going 15.♖ad1 continues this way: 19.d6 ♕d7 20.b5 ♘e6 21.c6 (I also thought that if I miscalculated something in the line with 21.c6, I could always slow down with 21.♗d5 and prepare c6. It's clear that White has ample compensation for the knight) 21...bxc6 22.bxc6 ♕xc6 23.♗d5 ♕d7 24.♗xa8 ♗a6.

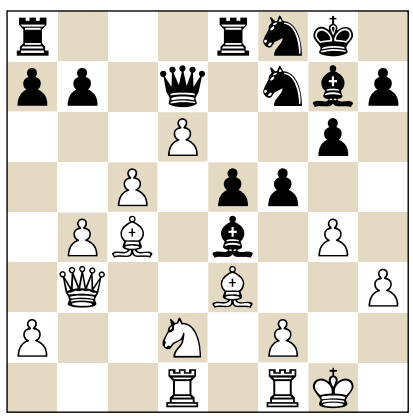


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

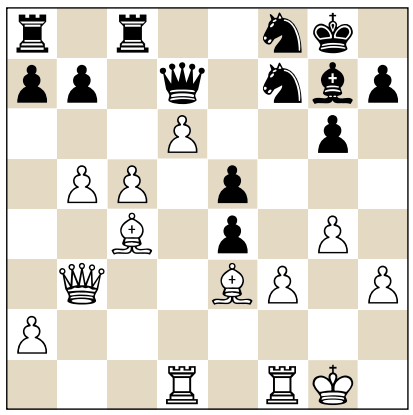
Yes, this is one of the lines in which my f1-rook was hanging, but 25.♕d5! was the point of my line.

19.♘d2 f5 After 19...♗xd5, 20.♗xd5 is winning for White.

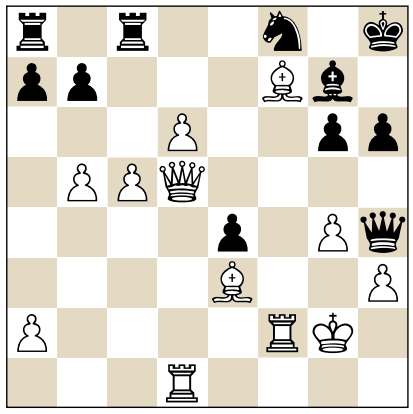
20.d6 ♕d7



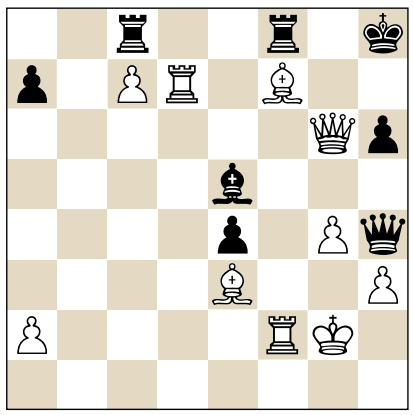
21.♘xe4
21.f3 ♗c6 22.b5 was also possible. And 21.b5 wins as well.
21...fxe4 22.b5 ♖ec8
Or 22...♖ac8 23.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 24.d7 ♘xd7 25.♖xd7 ♕xb3 26.axb3, with a completely winning endgame.
23.f3



Deploying my last piece. Black is completely lost.
23...♔h8 24.♗xf7 exf3 25.♖xf3 e4 26.♖f2 ♕d8 27.♕d5 ♕h4 28.♔g2 h6



29.c6 bxc6 30.bxc6 ♘h7 31.d7 ♖f8 32.c7 ♘f6 33.♕e6 ♘xd7 34.♖xd7 ♖ac8 35.♕xg6 ♗e5



36.♕xh6+ ♕xh6 37.♗xh6
Black resigned.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

In the last round Alina Kashlinskaya beat Sam Sevian with creative and vigorous play. In the Just Checking questionnaire in this issue, she calls it the best game she ever played.

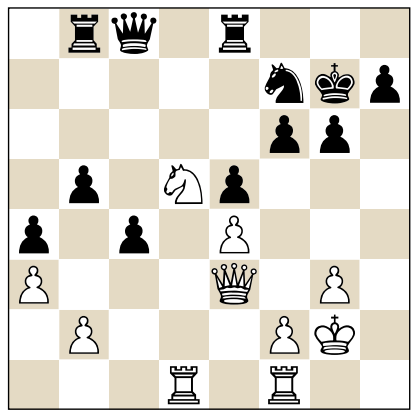
I was happy that I had managed to give myself a birthday present, although when the game finished, I didn't know that the real gift would come later that evening, with my husband winning the tournament!

The winner

If you didn't really follow the event and skipped the first pages of this article, you must be wondering by now who actually won the event. Radek Wojtaszek started the tournament with a draw, but then tremendously picked up pace with four wins (and one bye in between!), eventually finishing on +5 with a final-round draw against Arkadij Naiditsch. Little did he know that his rivalry with Naiditsch, who is playing for Azerbaijan these days, was just starting! After MVL had lost a bend-or-break game against Grischuk, a blitz tiebreak between Wojtaszek and Naiditsch was to decide the winner. In the commentary room, I was asked for my pick and I chose Naiditsch (please forgive me, Radek), citing as my reasons that he had a pretty decent tiebreak experience against Magnus Carlsen in the 2015 Grenke Classic. Even though he lost that match in the end, he did put up a good fight and gave the World Champion a run for his money.

In the first tiebreak game my hunch about Naiditsch's chances seemed to be confirmed...

Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Arkadij Naiditsch
Douglas 2018 (tiebreak-1)



position after 35.♕xe3

Things had gone horribly wrong for Wojtaszek.
35...h5

The Real Vasily Smyslov

Smyslov on the Couch
by Genna Sosonko

Sosonko portrays the seventh World Champion, with whom he spent considerable time over the board, during tournaments and while meeting at each other's homes. Smyslov the man was far more balanced than most of his contemporaries, capable of a relaxed and yet principled approach to life. Unlike most top players he was able to reach a very high standard in his chosen hobby - in his case, classical singing - even while playing chess at the very top.

Sosonko devotes a fascinating chapter ('Match fixing in Zurich') to the accusations that David Bronstein brought against Smyslov in 2001. He places the polemic that followed in the context of the Soviet Chess School. Were Bronstein's accusations justified?

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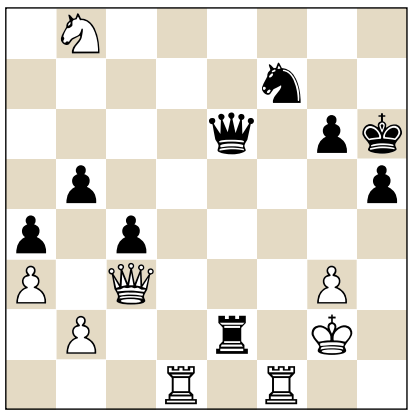
Knowing how the game turned out, I would say this was probably a big mistake. 35...♕c6 was easily winning. **36.f4!** Suddenly White gets an attack on the f-file, and the presence of the annoying knight on d5 makes the position quite nasty for Black in a blitz game.

36...♕g4 36...♕c6! 37.fxe5 f5 is definitely not an easy line to see.

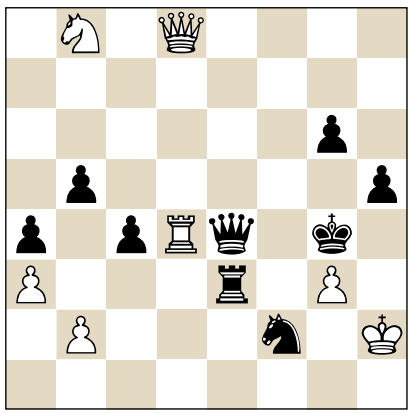
37.fxe5 ♖xe5 38.♘xf6 ♕e6 39.♘d7 ♖xe4 40.♕c3+ ♔h6 41.♘xb8 ♖e2+



At the high price of a rook, Black has managed to turn the tables again, and White has to be careful to neutralize Black's initiative.

42.♖f2 ♕e4+ 43.♔g1 ♖e3 44.♕d2 ♘g5 No longer easy! **45.♕d6 ♘h3+ 46.♔h2 ♘xf2 47.♕f8+ ♔g5 48.♕d8+ ♔g4** Why not 48...♔h6 ? It is always a good idea to repeat once and then decide what to do!

49.♖d4



49...♔f3 49...♖e2! was Black's last chance: 50.♖xe4+ ♘xe4+ 51.♔g1 ♖e1+, with an immediate draw.

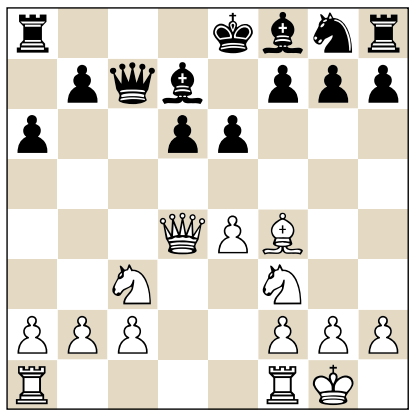
50.♖xe4 ♖xe4 51.♕f6+ ♔e2 52.♔g2 ♘d3 53.♕f3+

Black resigned.

You would think such a loss would devastate Naiditsch... In the second game he had to bounce back, and that's precisely what he did.

Arkadij Naiditsch
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Douglas 2018 (tiebreak-2)
Sicilian Defence, Moscow Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♘d7 4.0-0 a6 5.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 6.d4 cxd4 7.♕xd4 ♕c7 7...e5 is the usual way. **8.♘c3 e6 9.♗f4!**



When I saw this move, I realized that the tiebreak wouldn't end so quickly.

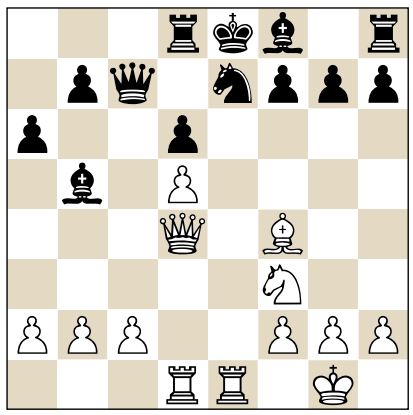
9...♗c6

In case of 9...e5 10.♘xe5 dxe5, there is 11.♘d5!, an important intermezzo before taking on e5. I only saw 11.♗xe5, missing 11...♗c5! 12.♕d5 ♕b6 13.♗xg7 ♘e7, and the rook lives to fight another day.

10.♖ad1 ♖d8 11.♘d5!

It would be nice to bring the final piece into action with 11.♖fe1, but it would clash with the other principle of losing momentum(!): 11...e5! 12.♘d5 ♗xd5 13.exd5 f6, and the worst is over for Black.

11...exd5 12.exd5 ♗b5 13.♖fe1+ ♘e7



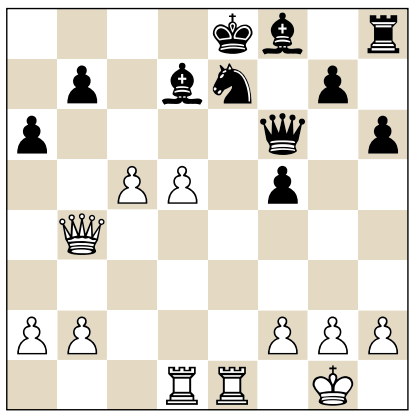
With a lot of money and prestige at stake, the blitz play-off between Radek Wojtaszek and Arkadij Naiditsch was a nervous affair. The Polish GM prevailed in the Armageddon game, taking home £ 38,000.

ALINA L'AMI

14.♘g5!

Energetic play by White.

14...h6 15.♘e4 f5 16.♘xd6+ ♖xd6 17.♗xd6 ♕xd6 18.c4 ♗d7 19.c5 ♕f6 20.♕b4



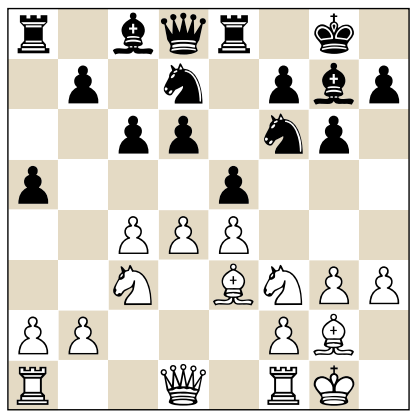
And although Radek almost managed to survive, the game finally reached its correct result (1-0, 77).

And so an Armageddon game was to decide on the winner of IoM!, which according to the rules meant, '5 minutes for White and 4 minutes for Black, plus an increment of 2 seconds a move starting from move 61, and Black having draw odds'. The toss of a coin determined that Wojtaszek could choose his colour. He chose White and therefore would have to win.

Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Arkadij Naiditsch
Douglas 2018 (tiebreak-3)
King's Indian Defence, Fianchetto Variation

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 d6 6.0-0 ♘bd7 7.♘c3 e5 8.e4 ♖e8 9.♗e3 c6 10.h3 a5

This was the exact same line that had netted Naiditsch two pawns in the first tiebreak game, but Radek had had enough of this nonsense by now ☺.

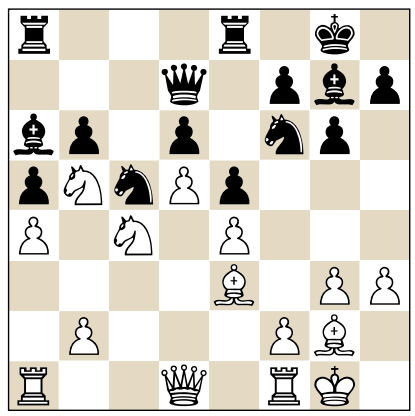


11.d5! Just killing Black's idea, which is ...exd4.

11...♘c5 12.♘d2

This is the start of Radek's reign. Black can only sadly watch what is going to happen next...

12...cxd5 13.cxd5 b6 14.a4! ♗a6 15.♘b5 ♕d7 16.♘c4

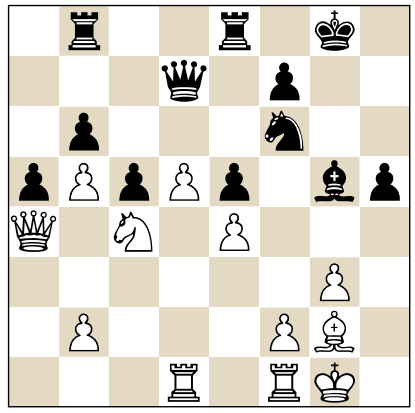


16...♗xb5 16...♘xa4!? would have made things more exciting.

17.axb5 ♖ab8 18.♗xc5 dxc5 19.♕a4 h5 20.h4!

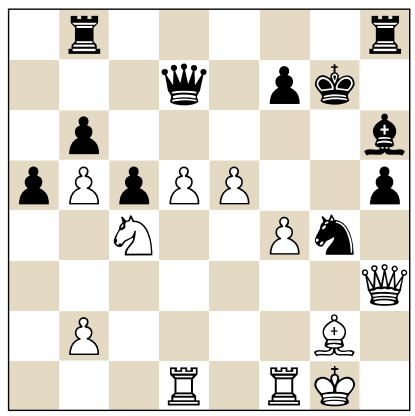
No counterplay on the dark squares.

20...♗h6 21.♖ad1 g5 22.hxg5 ♗xg5



23.♕b3! Radek easily neutralizes Black's imaginary threats.

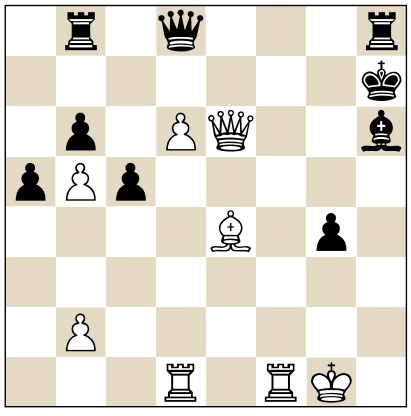
23...♔g7 24.f4 exf4 25.gxf4 ♗h6 26.e5 ♘g4 27.♕h3 ♖h8



28.f5 And it was done so efficiently!

28...♔f8 29.e6 ♕d8 30.f6

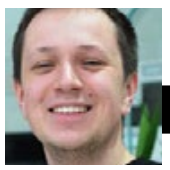
♘xf6 31.d6 fxe6 32.♘e5 ♔g7 33.♕g3+ ♘g4 34.♘xg4 hxg4 35.♕e5+ ♔g8 36.♕xe6+ ♔h7 37.♗e4+



Black resigned.

In his winner's speech, Radek Wojtaszek said how much he had enjoyed being in the Isle of Man, adding that he thought his wife Alina would agree. He had a special word of thanks for Vishy Anand 'from whom I learnt a lot and who is one of the reasons why I am here!' He modestly concluded that he was hoping to be back next year to defend his title.

Let's end this article with the best game Radek Wojtaszek played in Isle of Man, a crucial win against Mickey Adams in Round 8.



NOTES BY
Radek Wojtaszek

Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Michael Adams
Douglas 2018 (8)
Catalan Opening Accepted

With two rounds to go I was in the leading pack with six other players and with a score of 5½ out of 7. This probably being my last game as White, I thought it would be opportune to put some 'real' pressure on my opponent not so simple given that my opponent, Mickey Adams, is both a solid and an all-around player. And with six out of our seven previous games having ended in a draw,

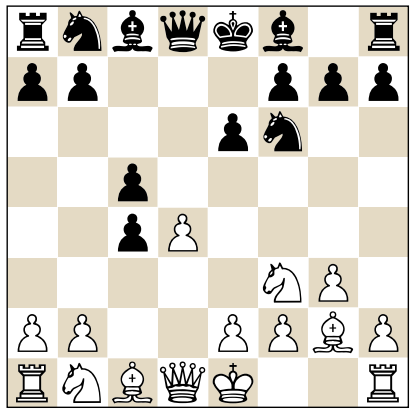
'He had a special word of thanks for Vishy Anand "from whom I learnt a lot and who is one of the reasons why I am here!"'

I wasn't all that optimistic about my chances.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3

In the only game that I had managed to beat Mickey, I had also played the Catalan. With this nice memory in mind, I thought it would also be a good choice for this game.

3...d5 4.♗g2 dxc4 5.♘f3 c5

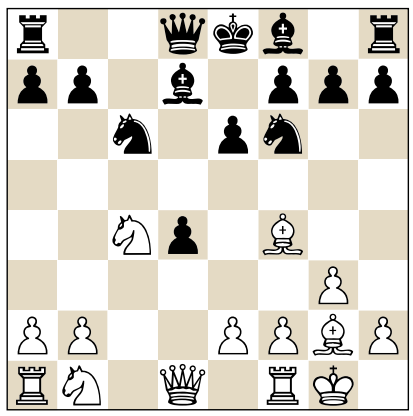


I had expected this, since my opponent had played it twice before. In our previous encounters I had faced the more classical systems with 4...♗e7 and 4...♗b4+.

6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♘e5 ♗d7 8.♘xc4!?

A somewhat forgotten line, but I remembered having some problems when analysing this from Black's point of view, so I thought it might be interesting to try it as White.

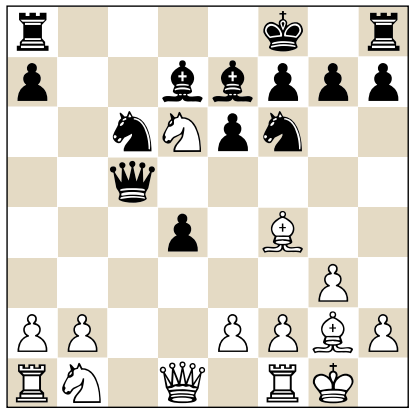
8...cxd4 9.♗f4



9...♗e7

9...♘d5 is the only move if Black wants to castle, but White gets nice compensation for the pawn after 10.♘d6+ ♗xd6 11.♗xd6 ♘de7 12.♘d2! (12.♕b3?! ♘a5!) 12...0-0 13.♕b3.

10.♘d6+ ♔f8 11.♘xb7 ♕b6 12.♘d6 ♕c5 After this move Black is supposed to be OK in the official theory. Black's position looks quite suspect but it's difficult to prove it.

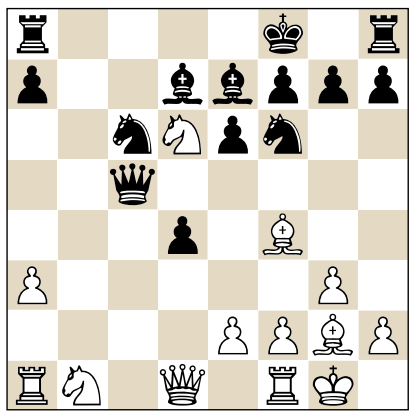


13.b4!

13.♘e4?! is way too timid: 13...♘xe4 14.♗xe4 e5 15.♗d2 f5, and White's pieces are being pushed back.

13.♕b3 was the only serious try: 13...♗xd6 14.♖c1, with a similar plan as in the game, but with the difference that after 14...♕b4! 15.♕xb4 ♗xb4 16.♗xc6 ♖c8 Black is doing fine, and now it obviously doesn't matter that he didn't manage to castle.

13...♕xb4 14.a3 ♕c5



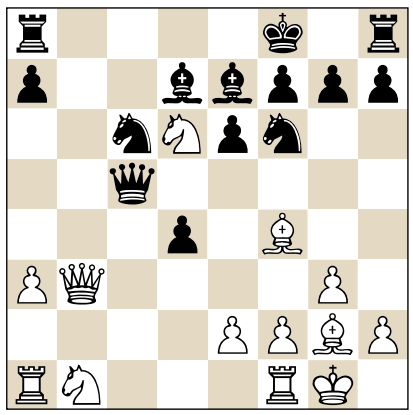
15.♕b3!?

The actual novelty. White has sacrificed a pawn to keep this strong

knight on d6, at least for a while. Of course, with an engine running it's easy to prove that Black is objectively fine, but during an actual game, with many pieces on the board and with such an exposed king, it's quite dangerous for Black.

There is a funny hidden story connected to this idea. Just before Isle of Man, I had played in the European Club Cup in Greece, and at some point I thought that I would have liked to have analysed this line a bit more carefully. It turned out that none of the friends that I usually work with were available, so I decided to ask my wife to check this line for me. She was there with me and didn't play, so I disrupted her holidays, but in the end we agreed it had been worth it ☺.

The move that had been played before was 15.♘d2, and my opponent faced it in 2008: 15...e5 16.♘2e4 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♕b6 18.♖b1 ♕c7, and White didn't have enough counterplay in Gelfand-Adams, Yerevan 2008.



15...♘a5??

This is a losing mistake. It's easy to criticize such a blunder, but with all pieces on the board it's not easy to make the right choice.

After 15...♗xd6? White goes 16.♖c1!. This explains the whole 13.b4 idea. Now the b4-square is not available.

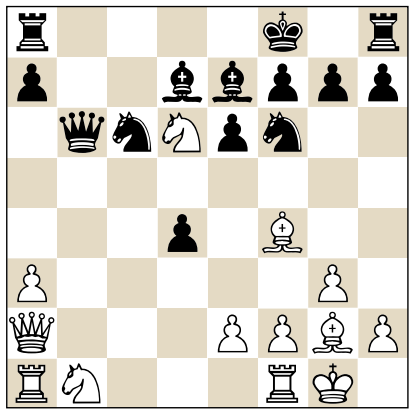
The engine's first line is 15...♕h5!, but that didn't look natural to me, so I wasn't particularly worried about this move: 16.♘c4 ♘d5 17.♕b7 ♖d8 18.♗c7 ♘xc7 19.♕xc7 ♕b5! 20.♘bd2 ♕b8!. In this manner

ALINA L'AMI

In the key encounter with Mickey Adams, Radek Wojtaszek could use an opening idea that he had asked his wife to check when just before Isle of Man he had been playing in the European Club Cup in Greece.

Black exchanges queens and limits the damage, but even after 21.♕xb8 ♖xb8 22.♖ab1 ♖c8 23.♖b7 I felt that this looked promising.

The move I had expected most was 15...♕b6!?. It avoids the ♖c1 threat with tempo. Now White has several interesting possibilities, but I would like to mention the tricky 16.♕a2!?,

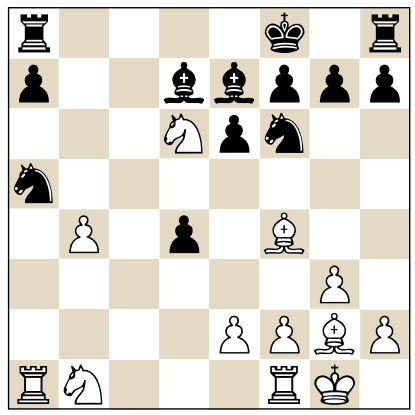


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

which Black should answer with the brilliant – which is also very difficult to find over the board – 16...♕d8!! (White has a nice initiative after 16...♘h5 17.♘c4! ♕d8 18.♗d6) 17.♘d2 g5!, and White has nothing better than repetition after 18.♘b7 ♕c8 19.♘d6 ♕d8.

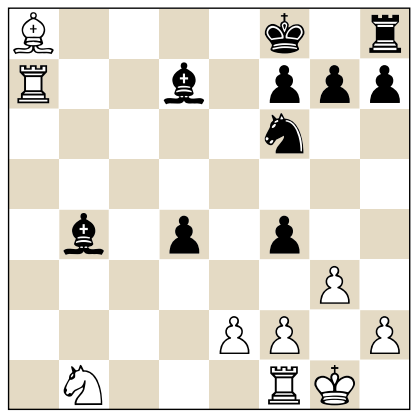
Another 'human' response was 15...♘d5, but after 16.♖c1 ♕a5 17.♕f3! the position looks dangerous for Black.

16.♕b4! ♕xb4 17.axb4



17...e5 After 17...♘b3, 18.♖a3! is probably what my opponent had missed, when 18...♘d5 19.♗xd5 exd5 20.♖xb3 g5 21.♗e5 f6 22.♖f3! would be the cleanest win.

18.♗xa8 exf4 19.♖xa5 ♗xd6 20.♖xa7 ♗xb4



Of course, White's position is winning, but there is a technical part.

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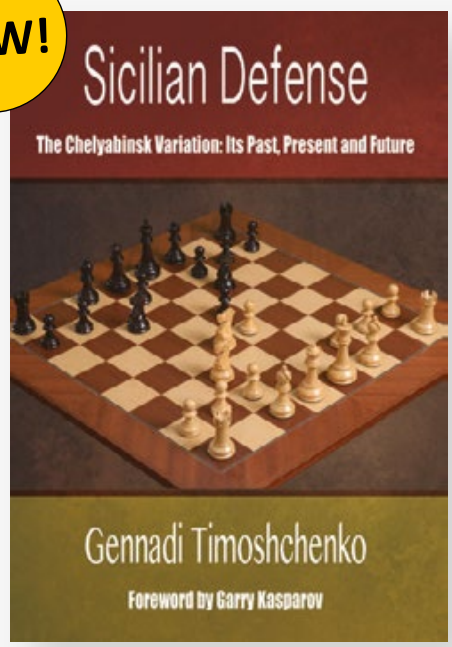
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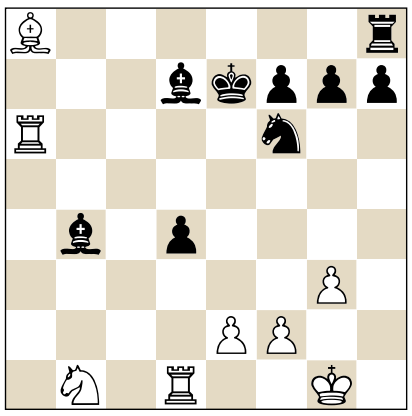
I was trying to be precise in order not to give my opponent too many practical chances.

21.♖d1! Activity is much more important than material. After 21.gxf4 g6 22.♖d1 ♔g7 23.♗f3 ♖c8 it is clear that Black is still fighting.

21...fxg3 22.hxg3 ♗c5

22...♔e7 runs into 23.♗c6.

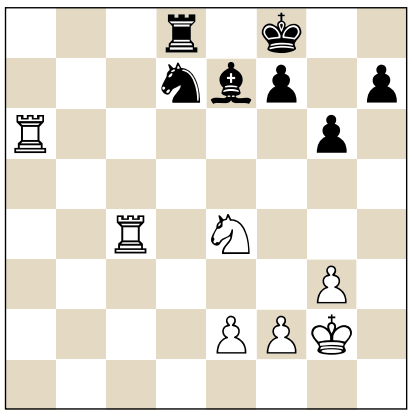
23.♖a5 ♗b4 24.♖a6 ♔e7



25.♗c6! Again, I thought that I should exchange one of my opponent's bishops to simplify things.

25...♖c8 26.♖xd4! ♗c5 After 26...♗xc6 27.♖xb4 ♗e4 White is lucky to have 28.♘d2 ♖c1+ 29.♘f1!.

27.♗xd7 ♘xd7 28.♖e4+ ♔f8 29.♘d2 g6 30.♔g2 ♖d8 31.♖c4 ♗e7 32.♘e4



Now the rest is simple.

32...h5 33.♖c7 ♘e5 34.♖aa7 ♖e8 35.f4 ♘g4 36.♘c3 ♘h6 37.e4 ♗d6 38.♖c6 ♖d8 39.♘d5 ♔g7 40.♔f3 ♘g4 41.♖b7 ♔f8 42.♖a6 ♗c5 43.♖c7 ♗d4 44.♖a4 ♗g1 45.♖b4 And Black resigned.

My critical win, allowing me to fight for first place in the last round and a tiebreak, as it turned out. ■

Douglas 2018

1	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2727	7
2	Arkadij Naiditsch	AZE	2721	7
3	Vladimir Kramnik	RUS	2779	6½
4	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2769	6½
5	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2763	6½
6	Wang Hao	CHN	2722	6½
7	Gawain Jones	ENG	2677	6½
8	Adhiban Baskaran	IND	2668	6½
9	Jeffery Xiong	USA	2656	6½
10	Anish Giri	NED	2780	6
11	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2780	6
12	Vishy Anand	IND	2771	6
13	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2760	6
14	Richard Rapport	HUN	2725	6
15	Le Quang Liem	VIE	2715	6
16	Gujrathi Vidit	IND	2711	6
17	Vladislav Artemiev	RUS	2706	6
18	Zoltan Almasi	HUN	2702	6
19	Peter Leko	HUN	2690	6
20	David Howell	ENG	2689	6
21	SP Sethuraman	IND	2673	6
22	Vladislav Kovalev	BLR	2664	6
23	Hrant Melkumyan	ARM	2660	6
24	Emil Sutovsky	ISR	2633	6
25	Mircea-Emilian Parligras	ROU	2623	6
26	Surya Shekhar Ganguly	IND	2622	6
27	Daniel Fridman	GER	2600	6
28	Alina Kashlinskaya	RUS	2447	6
29	Levon Aronian	ARM	2780	5½
30	Wesley So	USA	2776	5½
31	Michael Adams	ENG	2712	5½
32	Pavel Eljanov	UKR	2703	5½
33	Tamir Nabaty	ISR	2692	5½
34	Erwin l'Ami	NED	2639	5½
35	Alexei Shirov	ESP	2636	5½
36	Alexander Donchenko	GER	2610	5½
37	Rasmus Svane	GER	2595	5½
38	Bogdan Daniel Deac	ROU	2594	5½
39	Niclas Huschenbeth	GER	2589	5½
40	Robert Hess	USA	2574	5½
41	Sarin Nihal	IND	2572	5½
42	Alexandra Kosteniuk	RUS	2551	5½
43	Abhimanyu Puranik	IND	2547	5½
44	Krikor Sevag Mekhitarian	BRA	2546	5½
45	Semen Lomasov	RUS	2540	5½
46	Prasanna V Vishnu	IND	2504	5½
47	Gupta Prithu	IND	2458	5½
48	Anthony Bellaiche	FRA	2453	5½
49	CRG Krishna	IND	2445	5½
50	Boris Gelfand	ISR	2701	5

165 players, 9 rounds

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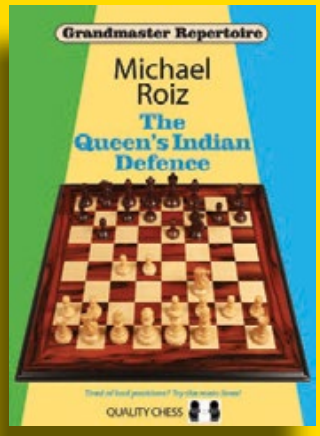

The Queen's Indian Defence

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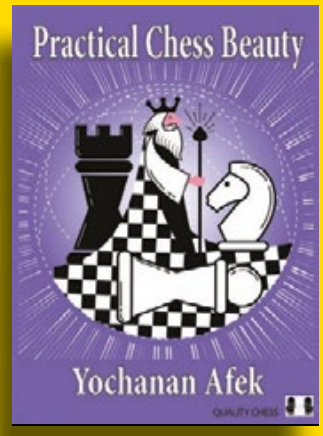
Kramnik's long-term manager, Carsten Hensel, tells the inside story of working with the Russian ex-World Champion.



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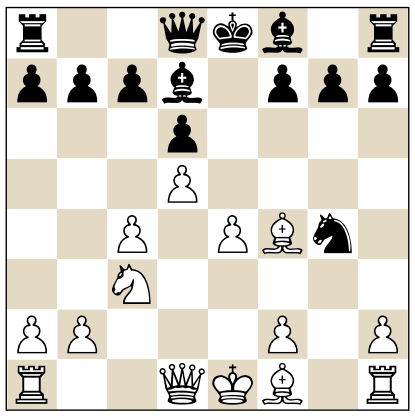
ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

Fianchetto Fortissimo

Why not gain some space while advancing a pawn for a fianchetto?

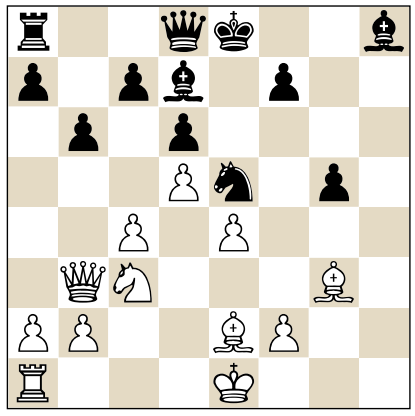
Here is a straightforward example of this column's pattern:

Oscar Panno
Vladimir Savon
Petropolis Interzonal 1973



position after 11.♗xf4

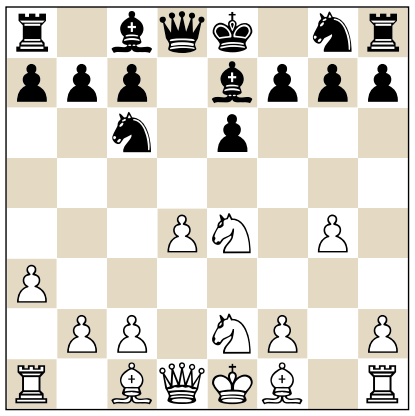
11...g5!? The 1971 USSR champion is not satisfied with a regular fianchetto and puts speed and space above the weakening of his kingside. Obviously, in this way he is winning the fight for the dark squares – a future knight on e5 will not be bothered by f2-f4 – but will his king find a safe harbour? **12.♗g3 ♗g7 13.h4** A standard reaction to expose the black kingside after the bold sortie of the g-pawn. **13...h6 14.♗e2** 14.hxg5 hxg5 15.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 16.♗h3 was a suggestion by Bikhovsky, when after 16...♘e5 17.♕h5 White has a slight pull. Black can improve with 16...♗xc3+ 17.bxc3 ♕f6!, though. **14...♘e5 15.hxg5 hxg5 16.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 17.♕b3 b6**



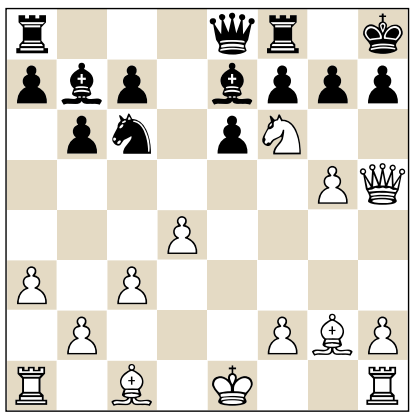
Panno has failed to put any real pressure on Black; Savon continued to gradually improve his position: **18.0-0-0 a6 19.♖h1 ♗g7 20.♘d1 ♕f6 21.♘e3 a5 22.a3 a4** The immediate 22...♔f8, followed by ...♖e8, was the proper way to activate the a8-rook. Still, Savon later won when Panno lost on time on move 36.

From this old example we see that this space-grabbing fianchetto is certainly not an entirely new idea, but it seems that its pros are more and more appreciated these days – less general conviction, more concrete judgement. For instance, as Jeroen Bosch showed in his SOS column in New In Chess 2018/6, Alexey 'g2-g4' Shirov has lately been toying with Botvinnik's g2-g3 fianchetto approach against the French Rubinstein, advancing his g-pawn straight to g4 instead. Bosch also reminded us of this game:

Alexander Alekhine
Max Euwe
World Championship match 1935 (7)
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘e2 dxe4 5.a3 ♗e7 6.♘xe4 ♘c6 7.g4!?



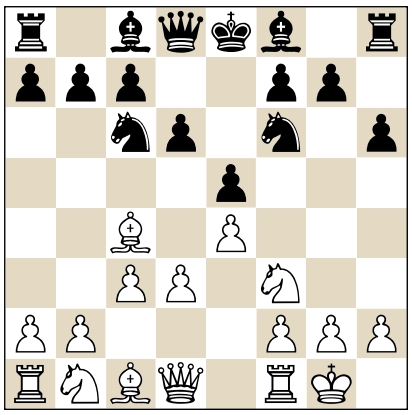
This move was condemned, and Alekhine was accused of under-estimating his opponent, but he had some sensible arguments: '7.♗e3 does not give White any advantage, while 7.c3 e5 yields Black good play, so White forcefully tries to maintain control of e4. In my opinion, the text-move got too harsh a judgement in the press. After correct play by the opponent White still obtains a complicated game with mutual chances.' **7...b6** Kasparov gives 7...♘f6 8.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 9.♗e3 h5! – the typical way to profit from White's early expansion – 10.gxh5 ♕d5 'and Black seizes the initiative'. Thus 9.♗g2 seems more appropriate. **8.♗g2 ♗b7 9.c3 ♘f6 10.♘2g3** This square suits the knight. **10...0-0 11.g5 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4** and Alekhine had his complicated position with mutual chances, in which he managed to make use of the advanced g-pawn: **12...♔h8 13.♕h5 ♕e8 14.♘f6!**



Certainly not decisive, but later Euwe lost his cool when he wrongly tried to simplify the position by exchanging the queens: **14...♗xf6 15.gxf6 gxf6 16.♕h4 ♕d8 17.♗f4 e5 18.♗g3 f5 19.dxe5 ♖g8 20.♗f3 ♕d3 21.♗e2 ♕e4? 22.♕xe4 fxe4 23.♗h4** and Alekhine eventually won (1-0, 40).

Alekhine's 7.g4 hardly got any followers, yet his idea inspired others. Besides Shirov's 5.g4!? versus the Rubinstein, Jonny Hector has tried to improve on Alekhine, popularizing 6.g4!?. OK, the usual suspects, you may say, but not my cup of tea. Then let's turn to an opening concept which is gaining ground, also amongst grandmasters with a more solid style.

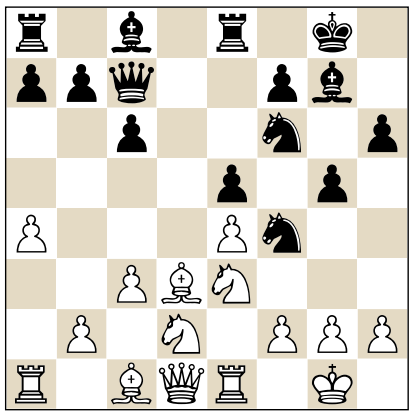
Grzegorz Nasuta
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Poland 2018
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 h6 5.0-0 d6 6.c3



6...g5 I don't know about you, but I grew up with 6...g6 as the usual move here, when …h7-h6 prepared the fianchetto by preventing ♘f3-g5. An overly humble approach now? My initial doubts about this …g7-g5 in the Giuoco Piano were confirmed when I witnessed my team mate GM Roeland Pruijssers being defeated horribly by Tiviakov in 2016: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 h6 5.0-0 g5 6.d4 (of course; the classical counterstroke in the centre) 6...exd4 7.♘xd4 d6 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♘c3 ♗g7 10.f4 gxf4 11.♗xf4 ♕e7 12.e5 dxe5 13.♗xe5 0-0 14.♕d4 ♖d8 15.♕f4 ♘d5 16.♘xd5 cxd5 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♗d3 ♗e6 19.♖f3 ♖h8 20.♕d4+ 1-0. Brr. Yet by now I have seen many grandmasters, and not only those who are known to like an experiment, putting their faith in Black's fianchetto fortissimo in the Giuoco Piano. In this game, Wojtaszek followed up with a typical plan. **7.♖e1 ♗g7 8.a4 0-0 9.♘a3 ♘e7!?** Intending …♘e7-g6 (yes the g6-square is available!)-f4, as well as …c7-c6, possibly threatening the

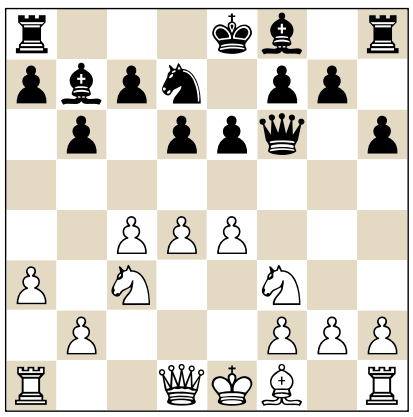
'… and Alekhine had his complicated position with mutual chances, in which he managed to make use of the advanced g-pawn.'

central advance …d6-d5. **10.♘c2 c6 11.d4 ♕c7 12.♗d3 ♘g6 13.♘e3 ♖e8 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♘d2 ♘f4**

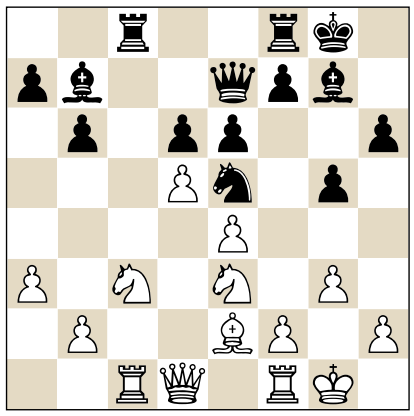


The knight has reached its destination, claiming a small spatial advantage. Black is just fine. White is very solid. In the end, the stronger player won (34, 0-1). Here ...g7-g5 almost seemed more like a solid space gainer, in the presence of a solid pawn centre. Similarly, in the following fragment, albeit in a completely different setting, the short comments of Polugaevsky are instructive.

Rashid Nezhmetdinov
Lev Polugaevsky
Kislovodsk 1972
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.♘c3 ♗b7 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6 7.a3 d6 8.e4 ♘d7



9.d5 Criticized by Polugaevsky in *Grandmaster Performance*: 'White should not have determined the pawn formation in the centre so prematurely. In trying to restrict one enemy bishop, he opens up the diagonal for the other one. Worth considering was 9.♗e2 or 9.♘b5.' **9...g5!** Only an exclamation mark by Polu, no further comments. 9...g6 may seem a legitimate alternative to execute the fianchetto, but indeed this unnecessarily modest. Apart from the firmer control of square e5, the ever looming possibility of chasing the f3-knight is a common asset – which may sometimes prompt Black to launch the g-pawn in the earliest of stages after ♘g1-f3: 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 and here, where even Alekhine restricted himself to 3...g6, Navara's 3...g5!? has been winning supporters these days. **10.♗e2 ♗g7 11.0-0 0-0** 11...g4!?. **12.♖c1 ♘e5 13.g3** Nezhmetdinov tries to carry through f2-f4 anyway. A poor plan, says Polugaevsky, who recommends 13.b4. **13...c6 14.♘d4 ♖ac8 15.♘c2 cxd5 16.cxd5 ♕e7 17.♘e3**



17...f5! Black is bringing his other bishop to life. Nezhmetdinov proceeded with his plan **18.f4** but the opening of the position suited Black's bishop pair. Polu did not let go off his advantage and won the game.

A small selection, of course. You will able to find many more examples. Anyway, I guess that from now on you will certainly think one pawn step further when looking for ways to develop your bishop. ■

SHENZHEN

MVL Master of

GU XIAOBING

The 2018 Shenzhen Masters striking a Chinese pose in traditional attire: Nikita Vitiugov, Radek Wojtaszek, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Anish Giri, Ding Liren and Yu Yangyi.

In the early rounds of the Shenzhen Masters, all eyes were on Ding Liren, who had not lost a game since August 9, 2017. His invincibility came to an end when Maxime Vachier-Lagrave beat China's number one in Round 7, the day after the Chinese had happily celebrated Ding's 'century'. Thanks to this win, the Frenchman finished shared first with Anish Giri and Ding Liren, taking the title on tiebreak. **ERWIN L'AMI** reports from China.

Shenzhen

Ding Liren's unbeaten streak ends at 100 games

It has been another great year for Chinese chess, the absolute highlight being the wins of both the men's and the women's team at the Olympiad in Batumi. Further good news was the successful title defence of Ju Wenjun at the Women's World Championship in Khanty-Mansiysk. And in the past months, working on an impressive unbeaten streak, Ding Liren broke through to the absolute top, crossing the 2800 barrier.

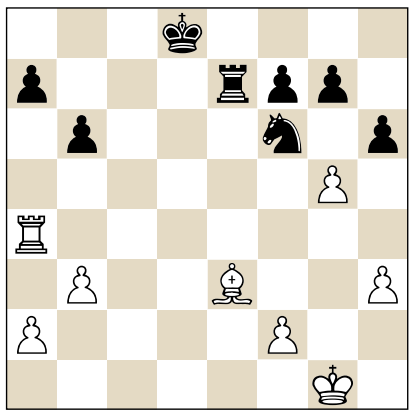
For me it's always a pleasure to visit China. The culture shock is fascinating and the events are always very well organized. When I joined Anish Giri to attend the second edition of the Shenzhen Masters, I visited the People's Republic for the fifth time.

The formula of the Shenzhen Masters was the same as last year: two Chinese top players, Ding Liren and Yu Yangyi (actually their current numbers one and two), faced four foreign GMs in a double round-robin event. What had changed was the venue, but that was not really a downsize. The mere fact that my hotel room had a jacuzzi on the (spacious) balcony gives you some idea of the playing conditions in Shenzhen.

Good form is a fickle mistress, as we saw once again. Many people must have thought that Radoslaw Wojtaszek was probably going to do well, since he had just won one of the strongest Opens in chess history in the Isle of Man (as described elsewhere in this issue). However, playing the Olympiad, the European Club Cup, Isle of Man and finally Shenzhen without a break proved too much for the Polish grandmaster.

The following fragment from Round 7 can serve as a clear example.

Nikita Vitiugov
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Shenzhen 2018 (7)



position after 30.g5

White is slightly better, since the bishop outweighs the knight, but obviously the game is well within drawing margins.

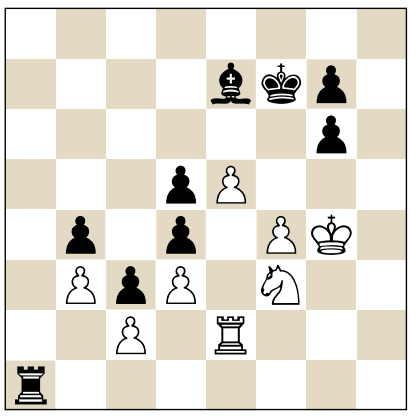
'With any passing day the organizers were getting more and more excited.'

30...♘g8?
Wojtaszek felt understandably reluctant to go for 30...hxg5 31.♗xg5, when White would be likely to create a passed h-pawn. Nevertheless, 31...♔e8 32.♗xf6 gxf6 33.h4 ♔f8 promises White little or nothing. Radek's choice would have been perfectly sensible if not for:
31.♗xb6+! axb6 32.♖a8+ ♔d7 33.♖xg8 hxg5 34.♖xg7
And, because he will lose yet another pawn, Black resigned.

Draw your own conclusions

After just two editions there isn't enough evidence to draw any scientific conclusions, but for some reason the Shenzhen Masters always has problems taking off. This time, the first four rounds saw all games being drawn. That did not mean that the tournament lacked tension, though. With every passing day, the Chinese organizers were getting more and more excited. Their number one player Ding Liren had not lost a single game since losing to Anish Giri in a match in Wenzhou last year. It might even have happened again this year, as early as in Round 1, when a chance for the Dutchman materialized out of nowhere.

Anish Giri
Ding Liren
Shenzhen 2018 (1)

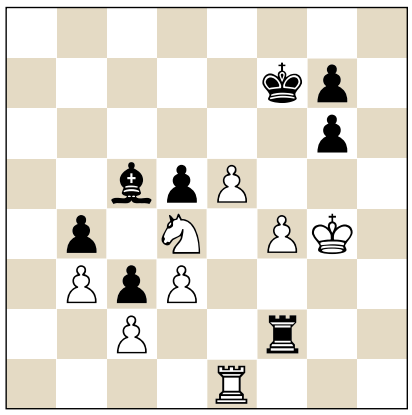


position after 33.♖e2

In an approximately equal endgame in which both sides expected a handshake to be imminent, the game continued:

'The mere fact that my hotel room had a jacuzzi on the (spacious) balcony gives you some idea of the playing conditions.'

33...♖f1 34.♖h2 After 34.♖e1! both players had seen 34...♖f2 (34...♖xe1 35.♘xe1 ♗c5 36.♘f3 is not very appealing) 35.♘xd4 ♗c5.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

But here 36.e6+ ♔e7 (36...♔f6 37.♔g3 ♖d2 38.♔f3 is technically winning as well) 37.♘c6+ ♔e8 38.♖a1! suddenly leads to mate. A far from obvious, yet very pretty way to strike!
34...♖c1 35.♖g2 ♗c5 36.♘g5+ ♔e7 37.♘f3 ♔f7 38.♘g5+ ♔e7 39.♘f3 And a draw was agreed. Amazingly, Black's 33rd move was likely a losing mistake.

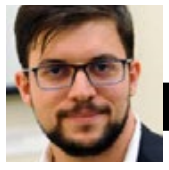
Truly amazing

By Round 6, Ding had defeated Wojtaszek and drawn his remaining games, taking his undefeated streak to a spectacular 100 games. What I find remarkable about this record is that it was set by a player that I would not describe as 'solid'. Ding is an immensely strong player, but one who takes risks and often walks a tightrope. Another important detail to mention is Ding's physical discomfort. After famously falling off a bike during Norway Chess in June, he has been recovering from a nasty hip fracture. That he nevertheless managed to keep his level of play is truly amazing.

The evening after he had taken his streak to 100, the organizers invited all of us to a famous Chinese round-table celebration to drink to his achievement. Being the modest person that he is, he made it pretty clear that he thought that all that fuss was not at all necessary!

Food for psychologists is the fact that on the very next day, after the big celebration, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave did 'the impossible' and defeated Ding with the white pieces.

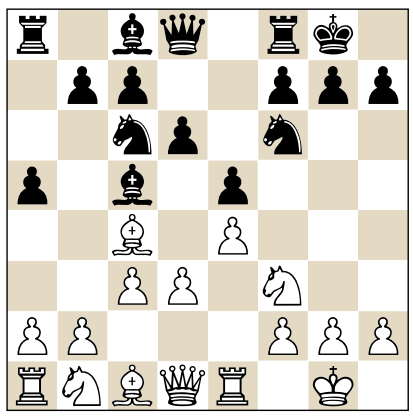
MVL takes us through that game.



NOTES BY
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Ding Liren
Shenzhen 2018 (7)
Giuoco Pianissimo

Before this game, Ding Liren had had an unbeaten run of 100 games, a remarkable achievement. I was nevertheless ready for a solid fighting game, since he usually doesn't shy away from complications, and I had drawn all my games so far.
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.c3 a5



A move that was only popularized very recently.
8.♗g5 This move rarely works after White has castled kingside, but it is now a very direct challenge to the move ...a5, claiming that Black has lost a tempo on the kingside.

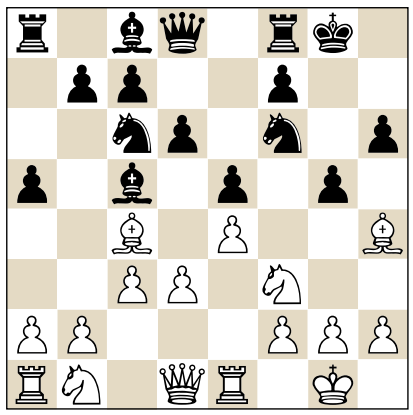
GU XIAOBING

Watched by school kids, Ding Liren and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave embark on the game that would end the Chinese number one's unbeaten streak of 100 games.

I had only played 8.♘bd2, in an Internet match against Nakamura, but here we can see Black's ideas behind ...a5: 8...♗e6 9.♗b5 (9.♗xe6 fxe6, and one of the first points of ...a5 is that White can no longer play b4) 9...♕b8! (the second idea behind ...a5: the queen will support the dark-squared bishop) 10.♘f1 ♕a7 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♘xe3 ♘e7, and Black is generally fine, having exchanged the dark-squared bishops.

8...h6 9.♗h4 g5

The thematic reaction, because it is the only way to challenge the pin on the knight.



10.♗g3 10.♘xg5 hxg5 11.♗xg5 won't work well for White because of the opening of the h-file: 11...♔g7 12.♕f3 ♖h8 13.♘d2 ♔g6! 14.h4 (14.♕g3 ♘h5) 14...♗g4! 15.♗xf6 ♕d7, and Black wins.

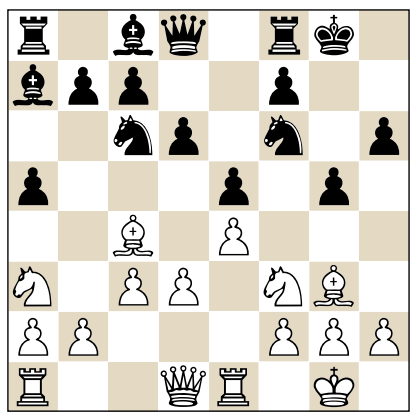
10...♗a7

A prophylactic move against d4.

10...g4 would run into 11.♗h4, and the eternal pin will prove very dangerous, as witness the following recent game, in which Black doesn't have the tactics that he has after the knight sacrifice on g5: 11...gxf3 12.♕xf3 ♔g7 13.♘d2 ♖h8 14.♗d5 ♘b8 15.d4 exd4 16.♘b3 c6 17.e5! dxe5 18.♘xc5 cxd5 19.♕g3+ ♗g4 20.♖xe5 ♕c8 21.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 22.♖xd5 ♘c6 23.♖e1 ♖e8 24.♖d6+ ♔g5 25.♘e4+ ♖xe4 26.♖xe4 ♕f5 27.h4+ 1-0, Areshchenko-Balogh, Hungary 2018.

11.♘a3

We are still following in the footsteps of Anish Giri, who first played this line against Pavel Eljanov. Now Liren comes up with an interesting novelty.



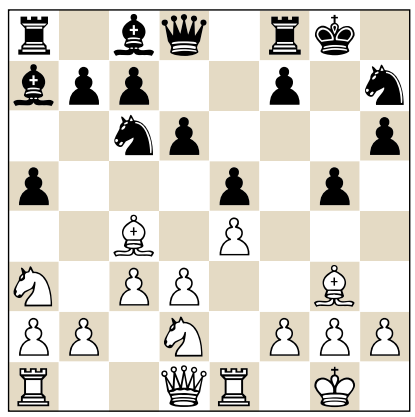
11...♘h7!?

A thematic move, simply preparing for ...h5 and ...h4 or ...g4, trying to exploit the odd position of the bishop on g3 to attack White's king with tempo.

After 11...♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♘c2 ♗g6 14.♗h2, I feel that White was happy to have achieved h3 and ♗h2 after having been strongly invited to. That game continued 14...♘h5 15.d4 ♘f6 16.dxe5 ♘xe4 17.♘e3, and White already had a serious advantage in Giri-Eljanov, Stavanger 2016.

12.♘d2

12.d4 h5 13.h3 didn't appeal to me. I wanted to limit Black's play on the kingside instead, even though the position is playable after both 13...♕f6 14.♘b5 ♗b6 15.♗e2 and 13...h4 14.♗h2 g4 15.hxg4 ♗xg4 16.♘b5 ♗b6 17.♗e2.



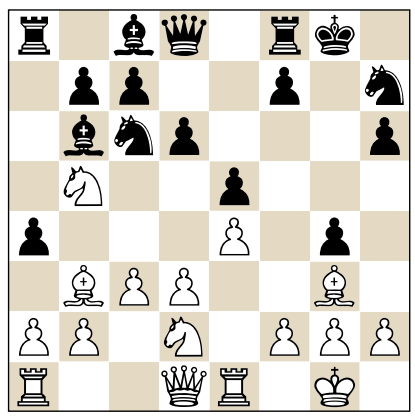
12...g4 Still aiming for ...h5, but now I am able to meet ...h5 with h4 without fearing ...♗g4.

13.♘b5 ♗b6 14.♗b3!

The other point of 12.♘d2: I can now harass the dark-squared bishop.

14...a4

An important inclusion. 14...h5 15.h4 would leave White with a better version, since ...a4 is no longer possible.



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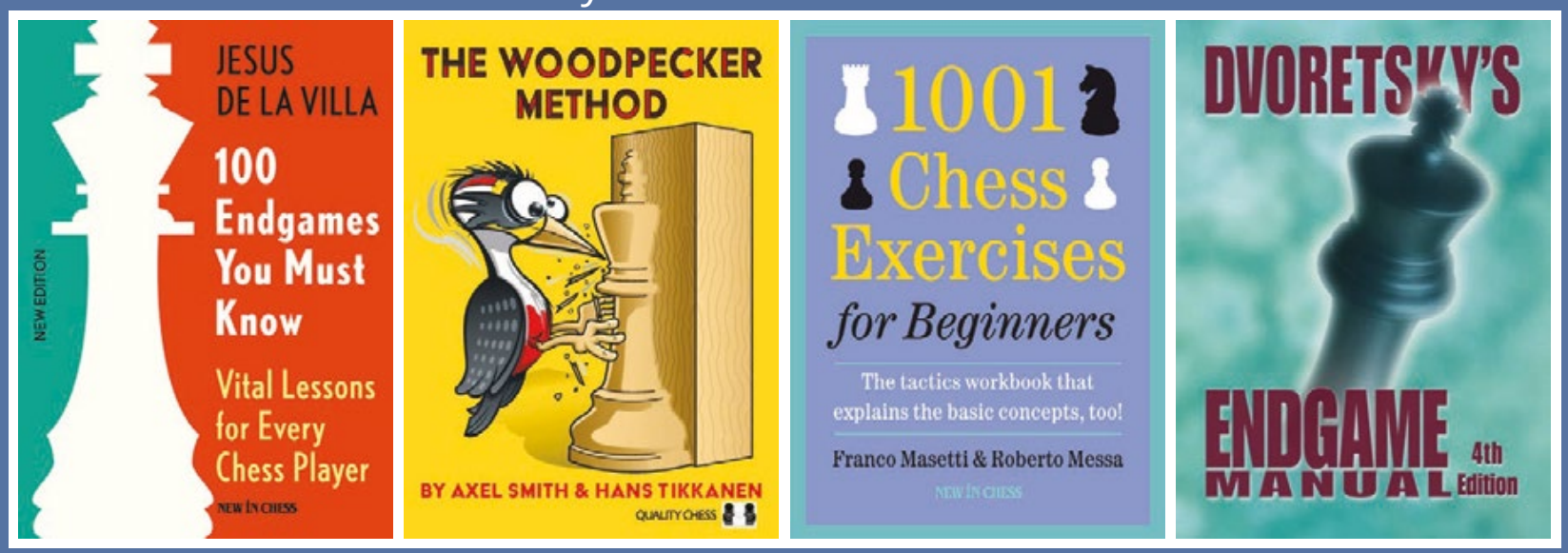
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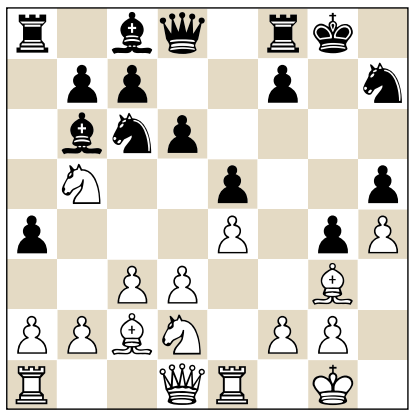
15.♗c2 15.♗xa4? h5 16.h4 gxh3 would be simply winning for Black, who has too many threats on the kingside now that 17.♕xh5 ♖xa4 is no longer an option.

15...h5 15...♘a5 would be the only way to prevent ♘c4, but now I can take the pawn with 16.♗xa4 (16.d4 is also a serious option) 16...c6 17.♘a3 ♕g5 18.b4 h5!, even though Black has some active counterplay. White is significantly better after the accurate 19.bxa5 ♗xa5 20.♘ac4! ♗xc3 21.♖c1 ♗xd2 22.♘xd2 h4 23.♗b3 hxg3 24.fxg3, when Black has restored material equality but has many weaknesses.

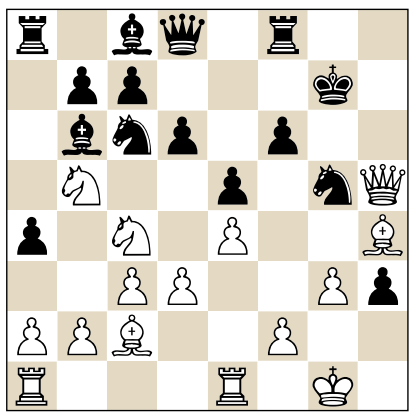
16.h4



16...d5?

Black's first serious mistake in the game, but arguably already a fatal one. He should have been extra careful before opening the centre with his kingside so exposed.

Instead, 16...gxh3 was mandatory, and after 17.♕xh5 I didn't really expect 17...♔g7!, which gives Black some counterplay by trying to repel the queen: 18.♘c4 ♘g5 19.♗h4 f6 20.g3!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

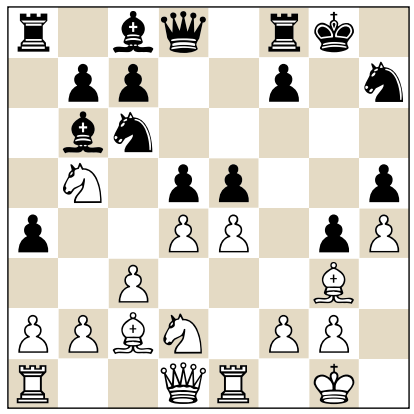
A very important move that leaves White with a large advantage (20.♘xb6?? ♖h8 21.♕e2 ♖xh4, with a decisive attack) 20...h2+ 21.♔h1 ♘h3 22.♖f1! ♘xf2+ 23.♖xf2 ♗xf2 24.♖f1 ♖h8 25.♕f3 ♖xh4 26.gxh4 ♗xh4 27.♕h5 ♗g5 28.♖f2, and the attack continues: 28...♗e6 29.♖xh2 ♗f7 30.♕h7+ ♔f8 31.♕h8+ ♔e7 32.♕g7 ♕g8 33.♕xg8 ♖xg8 34.♘xc7, and White regains the pawn with a risk-free advantage.

17...♕g5 18.♕xg5+ ♘xg5 is what I had expected, but I thought I would retain a serious advantage after 19.♘c4 hxg2 20.♘xb6 ♘f3+ 21.♔xg2 ♘xe1+ 22.♖xe1 cxb6 23.♘xd6, but this might not be all that clear after 23...♗e6.

19.♗h4! was probably the best way to go, when 19...♘e6 20.♘c4 ♗c5 21.g3 would be clearly better for White.

17.d4

Not the only move, but the thematic one. With all White's pieces converging on the centre, it would be really surprising if this move didn't work.



17...dxe4

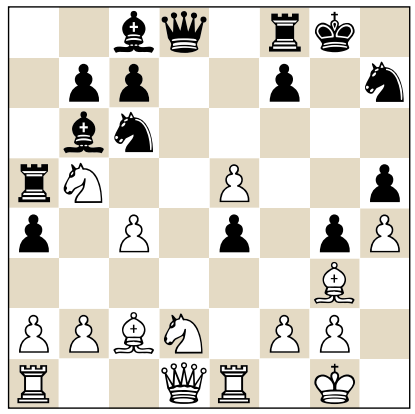
17...f5 was Liren's original intention, but among other things he forgot the clear-cut line 18.exd5 ♕xd5 (18...f4 19.dxc6 fxg3 20.fxg3 exd4 21.♘c4! dxc3+ 22.♘xb6 would win easily) 19.♗d3!, when he is unable to parry both 20.♗xe5 and 20.♗c4.

17...exd4 might have been the lesser evil, but Black's position is shattered after 18.exd5 ♕xd5 19.♘xc7 ♗xc7 20.♗xc7 ♗f5 21.♗xf5 ♕xf5 22.♘c4.

18.dxe5

The engine also suggests the fancy 18.♘c4, but there is definitely no need to allow counterplay with ...f5.

18...♖a5 19.c4



19...e3! 19...f5 20.exf6 e3 21.fxe3 ♘xf6 22.♘e4 would be hopeless.

20.fxe3 ♘b4

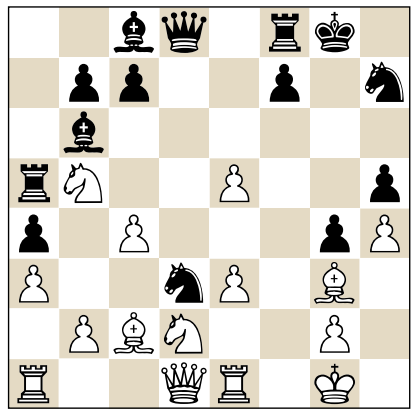
The last few moves were the best practical chance, as my pieces are a little stuck. I came up with what I felt was the most natural solution.

21.a3

21.♗e4? f5 22.exf6 ♘xf6 would allow Black unnecessary counterplay.

21...♘d3

21...♘xc2 22.♕xc2, and the difference in coordination is too great.



22.b4 Here, 22.♖e2! was a very cool move that would have won on the spot: 22...♗f5 (22...♘xb2 23.♕b1) 23.b4, and this is absolutely hopeless for Black. But there is nothing wrong with what I played.

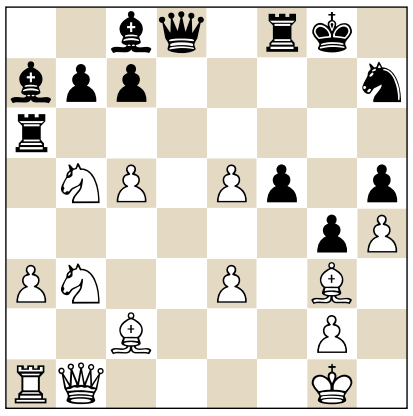
22...axb3

22...♖xb5 23.cxb5 ♘xe1 24.♕xe1 would offer very little resistance. Once again the ♘h7 is completely out of play and Black has too many weaknesses.

23.♘xb3 ♘xe1 24.♕xe1 ♖a6 25.c5 ♗a7

I sacrificed an exchange to get to this position, feeling that my pieces were too active and too well coordinated to not have a direct win.

26.♕b1 f5



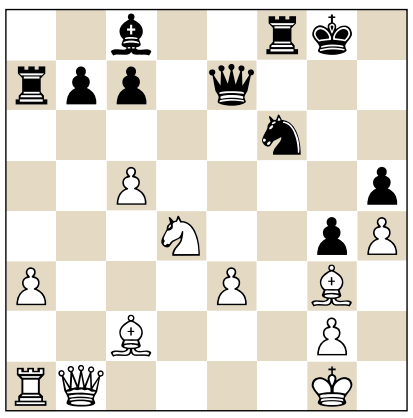
27.exf6 Inaccurate, as I did indeed have a killer blow here.

27.♘xa7 ♖xa7 28.♘d4 would win the f5-pawn and basically the game, since the h7-knight is still totally hemmed in.

27...♘xf6 28.♘xa7 ♖xa7 29.♘d4

In hindsight it was clearly a mistake to activate Black's knight, although I felt his king was much more exposed now. And although this is true, the line to prove it was beyond my reach.

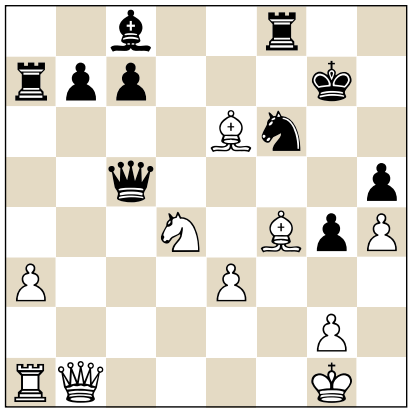
29...♕e7



30.♗f4 30.♕b3+ ♔h8 31.♖f1 was my original intention, but I couldn't quite make it work after 31...♕xc5 32.♕d3 ♖xa3 33.♕g6 ♕e7!, and while I knew there must be a win, I couldn't quite find it. But the exquisite 34.♘e6!! ♕xe6 (34...♗xe6 35.♗e5 ♕g7 36.♖xf6! ♕xg6 37.♖xf8+ ♔h7 38.♖h8 mate) 35.♖xf6 ♕xe3+ 36.♖f2 would have left Black defenceless.

30...♕xc5 31.♗b3+ 31.♕b3+ was simpler, but I had forgotten that 31...♔h8 (31...♕d5 32.♕d3!) 32.♗h6 ♖g8 33.♖f1 ♖a6 34.♕f7 ♕d5 35.♕xc7 would leave Black too exposed.

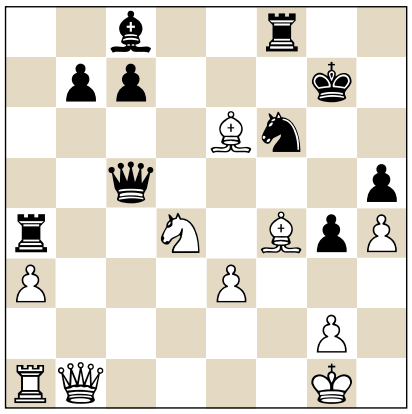
31...♔g7 32.♗e6 I pinned my hopes on this move, since Black won't be able to escape the forks. The ♘d4 controls almost the entire board!



32...♖a4! The only hope.

32...♖a6 33.♗xc8 ♖xc8 34.♕xb7 ♖ca8 35.♕xa8 ♕xd4 36.exd4 ♖xa8 was another defensive attempt, but after the technically accurate 37.a4! White has an easy technical win in sight.

32...♕c3 33.♗xc8 ♖xc8 34.♘b5 shows that Black can't escape all the forks!



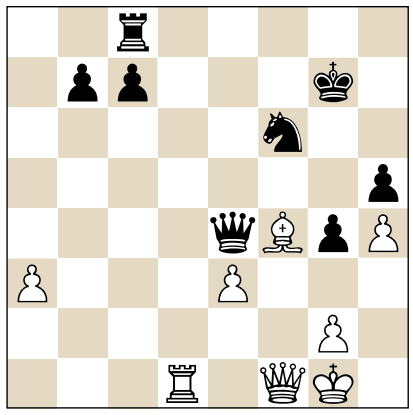
33.♕d3! I had to find this move when playing ♗b3+.

33.♗xc8?? ♖xd4 would drastically turn the tables.

33...♖a6 33...♕a5? 34.♗xc8 ♖xc8 35.♖f1 would leave Black with no defence on the kingside.

34.♗xc8 ♖xc8 35.♕xa6 ♕xd4 36.♕f1 The dust has settled and I have regained the material I invested. I am still better because Black's king is weakened, but I don't have a decisive attack anymore. Still, in practical terms, Black's position is so difficult to defend that my advantage is still quite decisive.

36...♕e4 37.♖d1

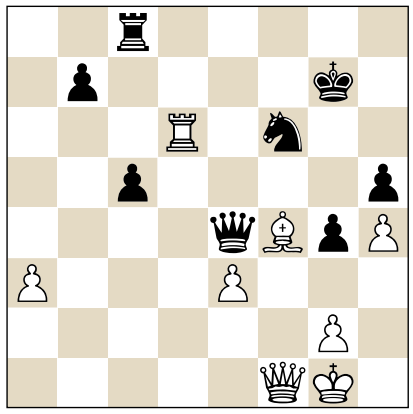


37...c5 Black errs already.

37...♘d5 was my first concern, but it fails to the simple 38.♕b5 ♘xf4 39.exf4!, and Black will either get mated or lose too many pawns.

37...♖e8! was the best move to stay in the game. After 38.♕b5 b6 39.♖d4 ♕e6 40.a4, White is still dominating, and there is no forced win because Black has kind of consolidated the protection of his king for the moment.

38.♖d6 Simple but effective. Here Black had one last chance.

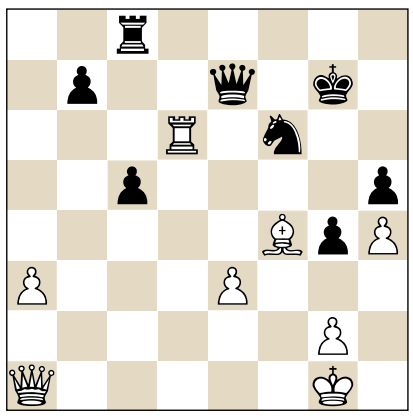


38...♕e7?

38...♖f8 39.♕a1 g3! was that last chance. I failed to find a forced win after this, although I had expected it to exist, considering the pin on the knight. In any case, I would have gone 40.♗xg3 (40.♗g5? ♕f5 41.e4 ♕f2+ 42.♔h1 c4!, and now I even saw that 43.♖d2? would lose to the brilliant shot 43...c3! 44.♖xf2 gxf2 45.♗e3 c2! 46.♗xf2 ♖d8, and Black queens) 40...♕xe3+ 41.♗f2 ♕f4 42.♗xc5 ♖f7, and White is indeed a pawn up, but is still facing a fight.

39.♕a1

Anish Giri and Erwin l'Ami raise their glasses to Ding Liren at the celebration that was organized to honour the Chinese GM's remarkable achievement.



39...♔f7

39...♖f8 40.♕e5 was the line I calculated, because after 40...♕xe5 41.♗xe5 ♔g6 42.e4 the pin is fatal.

After 39...♖d8 40.♖xf6! ♕xf6 41.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 42.♗g5+ wins.

39...♖c6 40.♖xc6 bxc6 41.♗g5 would lead to an easily won pawn ending.

Here I spent all of my remaining time, because I couldn't find a clear-cut win in the most obvious line.

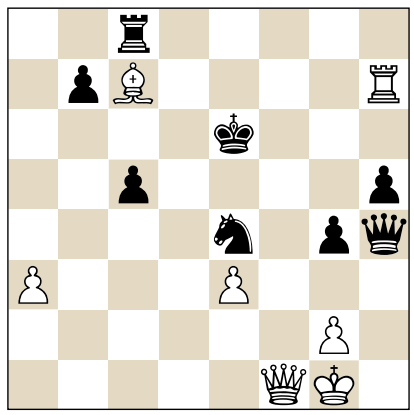
40.♗e5

I remember seriously considering 40.♖b6!, but in hindsight it's hard to understand what I was afraid of, since the threat of ♗g5 turns out to be lethal. After 40...♘d5, 41.♗g5! might have been the key move I had missed.

40...♘e4 41.♖h6 ♕xh4

Black has no choice, but at the same time he is kind of creating counter-play on my king. This shouldn't have been scary at all, but I forgot one detail that would have spared me a lot of extra calculation.

42.♕f1+ ♔e7 43.♖h7+ ♔e6 44.♗c7 Remarkably enough, after having thought for 15 more minutes and reassuring myself that my calculations were up to scratch (and they were), I simply didn't realize that after 44.♕f7+ ♔xe5 45.♖xh5+, I simply pick up the queen and get an easily won endgame.



44...♖xc7

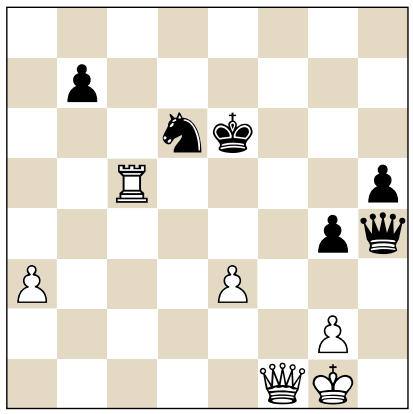
The following lines are rather pretty:

44...♖f8 45.♕xf8 ♕e1+ 46.♕f1 ♕xe3+ 47.♔h1! ♘f2+ 48.♔h2 g3+ 49.♗xg3 ♘g4+ 50.♔h3 and there is no perpetual check.

44...♘f6 45.♕c4+ ♔f5 46.e4+! and it's mate after 46...♔g5 (or 46...♔g6 47.♕f7+ ♔g5 48.♕g7 mate) 47.♕c1+ ♔g6 48.♕h6 mate.

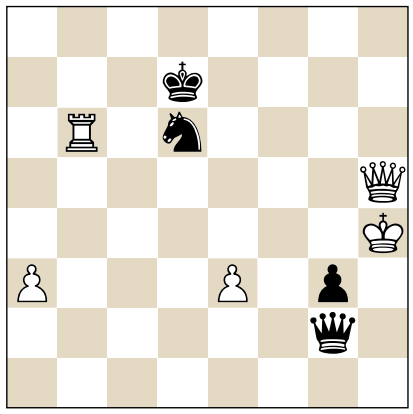
44...♘g5 45.♖h6+ ♔d7 46.♕f5+ ♔xc7 47.♕e5+ ♔d7 48.♖d6+ ♔c7 49.♖f6+ ♔d7 50.♕d6+ ♔e8 51.♖f8 mate.

45.♖xc7 ♘d6 46.♖xc5



The situation has clarified and Black can't create any counterplay and will lose any endgame. Still, Liren managed to ask me a few more questions.

46...b6! 47.♖c6 g3 48.♕f3 ♕h2+ 49.♔f1 ♕h1+ 50.♔e2 ♕b1 51.♕xh5 Controlling both d5 and b5. 51.♕xg3?? ♕b5+. **51...♕a2+ 52.♔f3 ♔d7 53.♖xb6 ♕f2+ 54.♔g4 ♕e2+ 55.♔h4 ♕xg2**



I had missed this resource, after which there is a clear way to win, but it's possibly the only one. Fortunately, it is not that difficult to spot.

56.♕h7+ 56.♕g4+? ♔c7 57.♖xd6? ♕h2+! would have been a nasty shock.

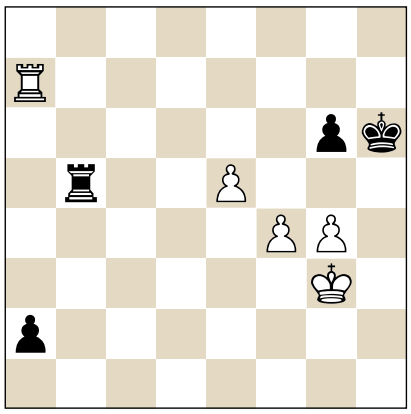
56...♔c8 57.♕g8+ ♔d7 58.♖xd6+ Black resigned.

The last time I received so many messages congratulating me after winning a game was after my game against Morozevich in Biel in 2009!

■ ■ ■

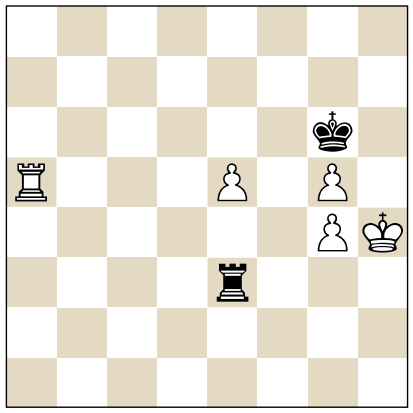
I could be completely wrong, but I got the impression that if anything, Ding was rather relieved to get rid of the whole record story! In any case, it didn't stop him from bouncing back in the next game against Yu Yangyi, winning an endgame in which Yangyi could have made things much more difficult for his opponent.

Ding Liren
Yu Yangyi
Shenzhen 2018 (8)



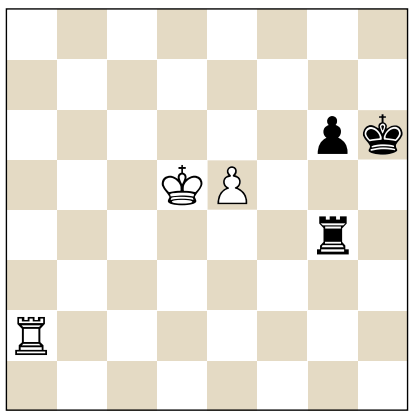
position after 62.f4

62...g5 This makes things easy for White. Over dinner that evening, Anish and I discussed what would happen after 62...♖b3+. The white king has to retreat, since the move planned by Ding, 63.♔h4, would be met by 63...g5+ 64.fxg5+ ♔g6 65.♖xa2 ♖e3 66.♖a5



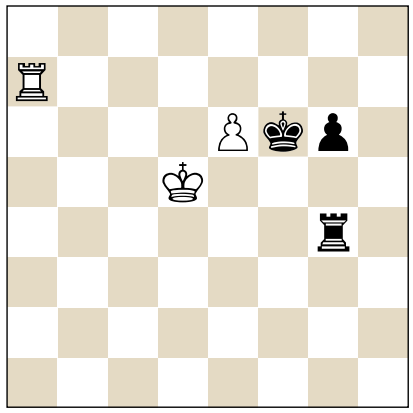
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

when we would see a rare case of a drawn position despite a three-pawn deficit. There is no way for White to make progress. Critical is 63.♔g2 ♖b2+ 64.♔f3 ♖b3+ 65.♔e4 ♖b4+ 66.♔d5! ♖xf4 67.♖xa2 ♖xg4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

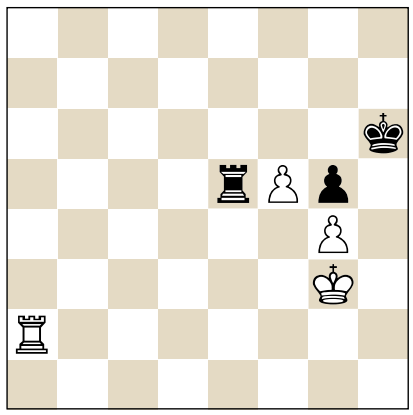
and White wins in a most curious fashion. Following 68.e6 ♔g7 69.♖a8 ♔f6 70.♖a7!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

the position would actually be drawn if Black were allowed to remove the g6-pawn or if his rook was not so clumsily placed on g4. As it is, White wins after, say, 70...♖b4 71.♖f7+ ♔g5 (♔g6! replacing the pawn, would be a draw) 72.e7, and the e-pawn is unstoppable. Who said endgames are boring?

63.f5 ♖xe5 64.♖xa2



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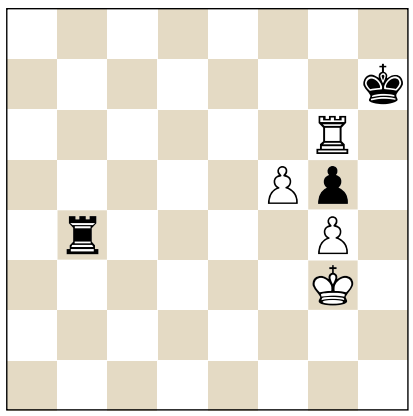
Black is unable to stop White from transferring his rook to g6, which makes the endgame dead lost.

64...♖e3+ 65.♔f2 ♖e4 66.♔f3 ♖f4+ 67.♔g3 ♖b4 68.♖a6+ ♔h7 69.♖g6



And White won the g-pawn and, soon after, the game (1-0, 74).

For Yu Yangyi, the theme of the tournament was the world top-10. At the start of the event he was ranked just 1 rating point shy of the world elite, and it was the above endgame versus Ding Liren that eventually prevented him from entering it. Yangyi did leave a great impression, though. He was fighting in every game and taking risks – sometimes excessively so – and going into the last round, he was just half a point behind the leaders.

That last round did not disappoint. Because of the relatively low number of decisive games, MVL and Ding Liren were leading the pack on just +1. Half a point behind were Giri, Yu Yangyi and Nikita Vitiugov. Ding did not get anywhere with White against Vitiugov, and a draw was quickly agreed.

Another interrupted streak

For Anish Giri the tournament had taken a somewhat curious course. Having fully incorporated the spirit of the event, he started by drawing his first nine games. Fans worldwide were holding their breath: would he fill their hearts with another clean sweep? It was not to be!

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Anish Giri
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Shenzhen 2018 (10)
Catalan Opening Accepted

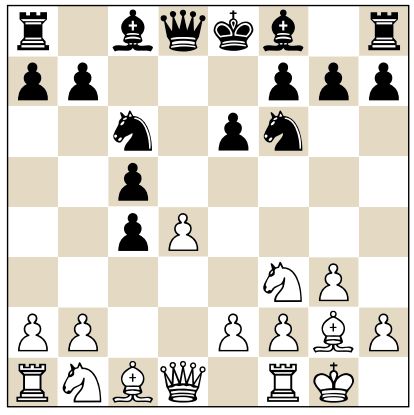
Going into the final round, my score was nine draws out of nine games, but as I have seen worse, this was not a big issue. A bigger issue was finding a way to get something going (pretty much on demand) against a player as well prepared as Wojtaszek.

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3

Starting off as a Réti, the game quickly transposed back into a Catalan.

2...♘f6 3.♗g2 c5 4.0-0 ♘c6 5.d4 e6 6.c4 dxc4

One of the many advantages of this system against the Catalan is that Black can play it against the Réti, where White will have to either go for this tabiya, or concede the centre.



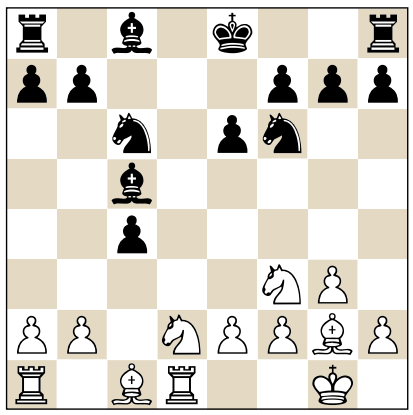
7.dxc5

Both my opponent and I myself have quite some experience in this variation of the Catalan, with both colours. Wojtaszek has recently been testing people here with 7.♕a4 and 7.♘e5, with very decent results, for instance winning an important game against Mickey Adams and eventually winning the Isle of Man tournament (see the winner's notes to this game in the Isle of Man report in this issue).

7...♕xd1 8.♖xd1 ♗xc5 9.♘bd2

The old-fashioned way of treating this endgame.

9.♘fd2 is a more fashionable trend, but with chess engines getting faster and faster, it is often hard to be a step ahead, in which case it is perhaps better to be a step behind.



9...c3

Black has to create some weaknesses in White's pawn structure in order to compensate for the c8-bishop, which is often really the main culprit in these Catalan endgames.

10.bxc3 0-0

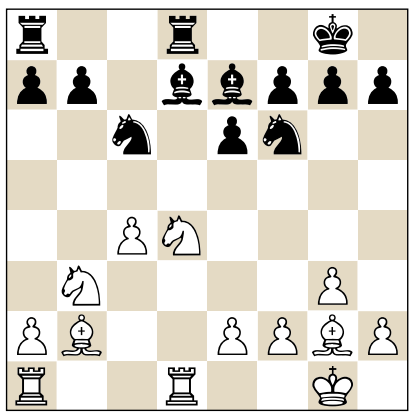
Now White has all sorts of different set-ups and ideas, but what I played can be considered the modern main line. In fact, I faced it myself relatively recently against Levon Aronian at the European Team Championship in 2017.

11.♘b3 ♗e7 12.c4

More direct is 12.♘fd4 ♗d7 13.♗g5, which perhaps explains why this used to be White's way-to-go in this variation around 10 years ago.

12...♗d7 13.♗b2 ♖fd8 14.♘fd4

Black would eventually go ...♗e8, connect his rooks before trading them, and solve his problems, so White really has to put some pressure on Black's position sooner or later.



14...♖ab8!?

A very rare move in this position, and

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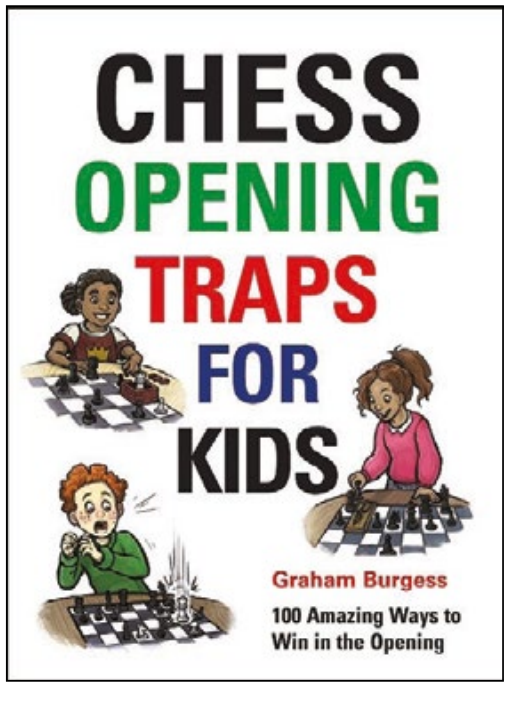

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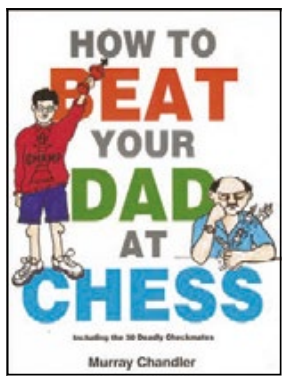

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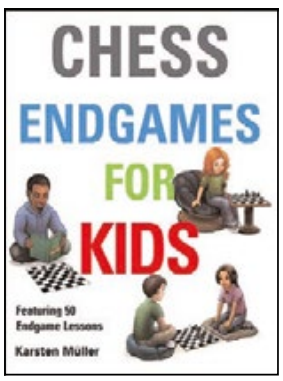

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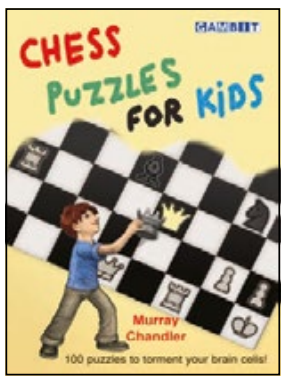

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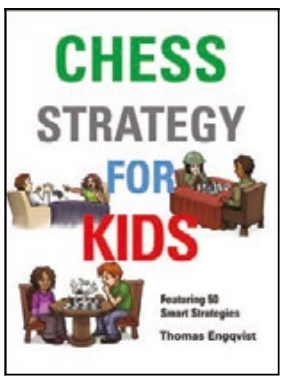

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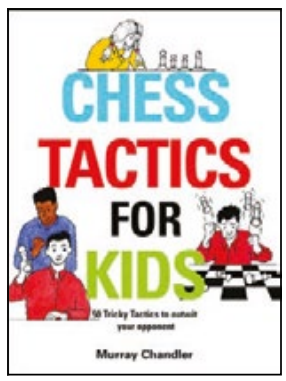

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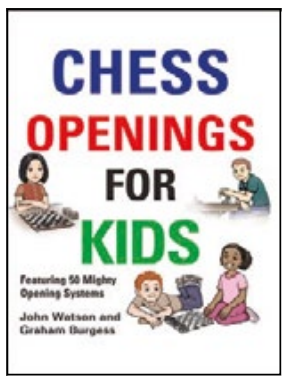

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indeed not the most obvious one. It was played recently by the well-known Indian theoretician Ganguly, which is a stamp of quality, so we had to seriously consider it in our preparations as well.

14...♖ac8 is the normal move, with which I easily solved my opening problems against Aronian. However, things aren't so simple here, since the rook gets hit with 15.♘b5, when, after 15...b6, White is at a crossroads: whether to go 16.♖ac1, like Lev, or play the immediate 16.♘d6. Interestingly, both my opponent and I had had this position before. In those games, I had the black pieces and he had the white ones, but here the roles had been reversed.

15.♘xc6

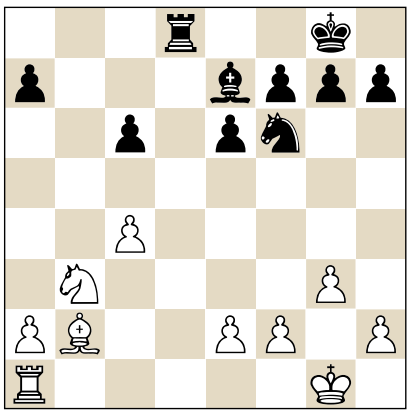
Giving the position the simple treatment. I felt there would be some chances to exploit in the rook and knight vs rook and bishop ending and didn't hesitate long to go for it.

15.♘b5 would be a slightly different version from that after 14...♖ac8. The position is very subtle, and moving a rook one square can make a surprising difference after any long and forced sequence.

15...♗xc6 16.♖xd8+

Ipatov didn't trade rooks against Ganguly, and the game was eventually drawn in one of the many great St. Louis tournaments this year.

16...♖xd8 17.♗xc6 bxc6



18.♗xf6!? I was aware that 18.♘a5 is the most testing move, but I also trusted my opponent's homework and decided to go for a position in which it is much harder to force matters.

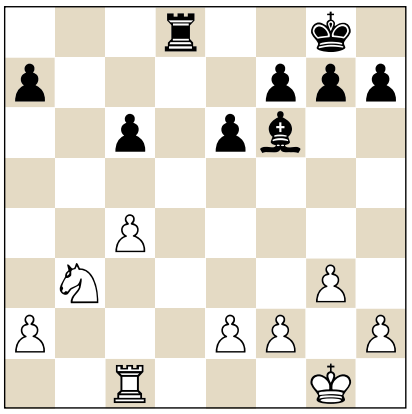
'Call me a pervert, but I found this unusual rook ending quite fascinating.'

Incidentally, this move is a novelty and my opponent started thinking here, although he might also still have been in book, but simply couldn't recall his analysis.

18...♗xf6

18...gxf6, absurd as it looks, has its merits.

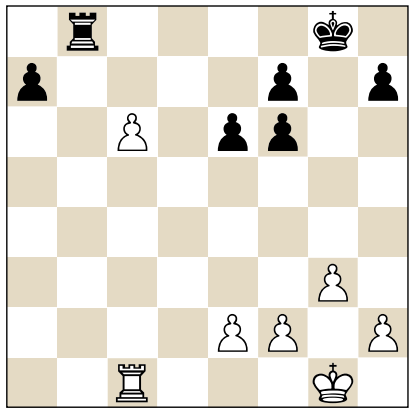
19.♖c1



19...g5

I was happy to see this move. In fact, my only concern at this point was the forcing 19...c5!?, which was pretty much the only move that would force me to calculate on this lazy Wednesday morning. The good news was that by now Wojtaszek was quite obviously thinking on his own, and then it is extremely risky to take such a daring and unnecessary decision.

After 19...c5, I think 20.♘xc5 is a must. With the white pawn on c4 my rook would lack manoeuvring space: 20...♖d2. Here I calculated a long and fascinating line that I briefly thought my well-prepared opponent might have had in mind: 21.♘e4 ♖xa2! (the rook endgame after 21...♖xe2 22.♘xf6+ gxf6 23.c5 ♖b2 24.c6 ♖b8 looks rather desperate, since Black's king must not leave the h7-pawn unattended: 25.♔g2, followed by ♔h3-g4-h5-h6, etc., as in the Soviet children's books) 22.♘xf6+ gxf6 23.c5 ♖b2 24.c6 ♖b8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and though at first I thought Black would be able to trade the a7-pawn for the far advanced c6-pawn, I noticed an interesting resource to keep this going: 25.♖a1! ♖c8 26.♖a6!, and now Black cannot solve his problems so easily. If his king approaches the c6-pawn, once again the ♔g2-h3-h4-h5-h6 march will win. On the other hand, if it stays on g7, then ♔g2-f3-e4/e3 becomes an attractive route. So, keeping both those routes in mind, Black should remain flexible with his king, erect a pawn barrier with ...f5/...f6 and hope that there will be no breakthrough.

Call me a pervert, but I found this unusual rook ending quite fascinating.

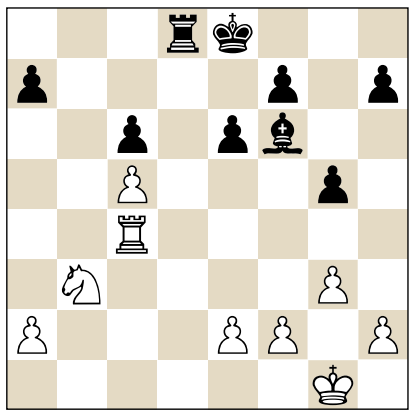
20.c5!

Important. The pawn goes to the 'wrong' colour, but in fact this is not crucial, and c6 is a weak pawn as well. What is more relevant is that my rook now has the freedom to manoeuvre and Black constantly has to be aware of the ♖c4-a4-a6 lift.

20...♔f8

It seemed a little inconsistent to first play ...g5 and then approach with the king, but it is too subtle to overanalyse this.

21.♖c4 ♔e8



GU XIAOBING

Nuances, finesses, move-orders… Anish Giri and Radek Wojtaszek in deep thought during their last-round encounter that would bring the Dutchman his first win.

The good news for Black is that White can't win anything by force, because after ♖c4-a4-a6, Black will go ...♖c7, and while ♘a5 will win the c6-pawn, it will be met by ...♗d4, winning back pawn c5. So since this immediate attempt won't work, White has to try to create a second weakness, presumably on the kingside.

One thing White can definitely be happy about is that Black has no active play whatsoever, and any attempt to activate the black rook will only backfire, since the a7- and c6-pawns are constant headaches. Also, in the long run White would love to get his king to c4. Daydreaming, basically.

22.♔g2

I was very tempted to play 22.g4!? (with or without the inclusion of ♖a4 ♖d7), kind of fixing the backward h7-pawn. However, I wasn't sure whether it was really a big deal and it annoyed me somewhat that I would block the fourth rank, which my rook is so beautifully overseeing at the moment. Also, any ...♗e7 ...f5 counterplay felt slightly annoying. It was also possible to bring the king to e2 after e3 and ♔f1-e2, where it is close to the c4-square.

That said, the move in the game is the most natural one of all.

22...h5 Played instantly, as if letting me know that I should have played g4. I was about to start regretting my decision, but finally decided to just make a move as well.

23.h3

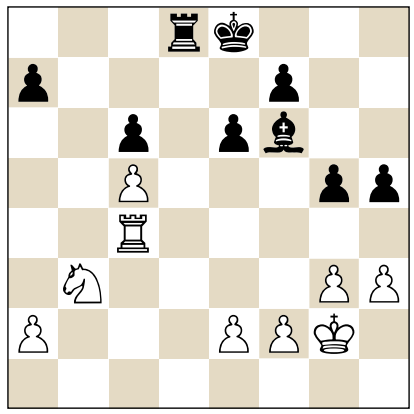
Just in case, preventing ...g5-g4 and keeping the option of g3-g4 (not that it would do much in the short term).

An interesting suggestion was 23.♖a4 ♖d7 24.♖a6 ♖c7 25.♔f3!?, starting the king march towards the queenside, which would be very useful, since the king would be a great helper guarding the c5-pawn, releasing the white knight from its duty. The only issue with this is that after 25...g4+ the fact that the h2-pawn is on a dark square is aesthetically somewhat disturbing. And while it may be totally irrelevant now, after many moves and Black getting ...h4-h3 and ...f5 in, it may be a source of counterplay.

24.♖a4 ♖d7 25.♘a5!?

I didn't hesitate much to use the opportunity given to me with ...♗e5 and threaten to force matters, especially since the knight can always return to b3 if I were to change my mind on the next move.

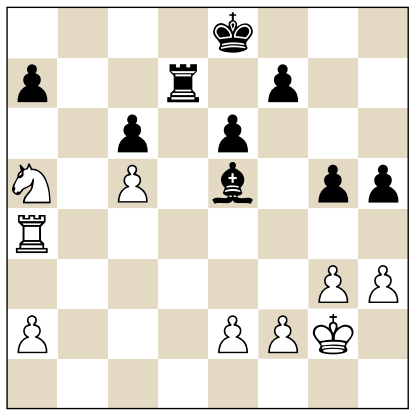
25.f4 also looked attractive, but it creates a second weakness and gives Black a source of potential counterplay, so I wasn't sure that this would be too bad news for him.



23...♗e5

A slightly clumsy move, since the bishop may get hit on this square in some cases. More flexible would have been to start with ...♖d7 and then move the bishop to get to ...f5.

After 23...♖d7 I actually wasn't sure if I had a smarter move than 24.♖a4, when, after 24...♗e7 25.♖a6 ♖c7 26.♔f3 (with or without including g4), it will be a long game, but Black is very, very solid and with good defending the position should definitely be tenable.



25...♖c7?

A massive error. Now that I can regroup my knight with tempo, this passive set-up won't hold. I didn't see how Black could force a draw after

Shenzhen 2018 — **cat. XXI**

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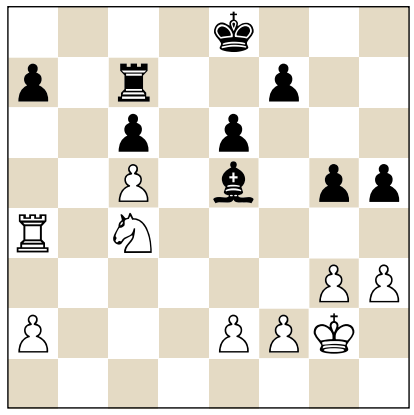
3 Ding Liren	IGM	CHN	2816	½ 0	½ ½	* *	½ 1	½ ½	1 ½	5½	2792
4 Yu Yangyi	IGM	CHN	2764	½ ½	½ ½	½ 0	* *	1 ½	½ ½	5	2766
5 Nikita Vitiugov	IGM	RUS	2709	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	* *	½ 1	5	2777
6 Radoslaw Wojtaszek	IGM	POL	2749	½ ½	½ 0	0 ½	½ ½	½ 0	* *	3½	2659

giving up the pawn with ...♖d5/...♖d4, but it definitely felt like the right direction for him.

After 25...♖d5 26.♘xc6 (objectively, it is better to go back with 26.♘b3 and continue with a slow game, perhaps trying to include the king in the proceedings) 26...♖xc5, 27.♖a6! was my point. Here I have to confess that I didn't see how exactly Black would hold, but the computer points out an elegant way to coordinate the black forces: 27...♗d6!. This looks like giving White an extra tempo, since the bishop will be attacked after the pawn capture, but in fact it is surprisingly clever: 28.♘xa7 (28.a4 ♔d7!; 28.e3! ♔d7 29.♘d4! ♗b8 30.♔f3 is the way to keep the pressure on) 28...♔d7 29.a4 ♖c2 30.e3 ♗c5, and with ...g4 and ...f5 counterplay coming and the knight being somewhat offside, White will be unable to keep this game going for very long.

26.♘c4



Black's pieces are very awkwardly placed now. His bishop has to attack the c5-pawn, which is extremely vulnerable, now that the knight has left b3, but Black is simply unable to do this.

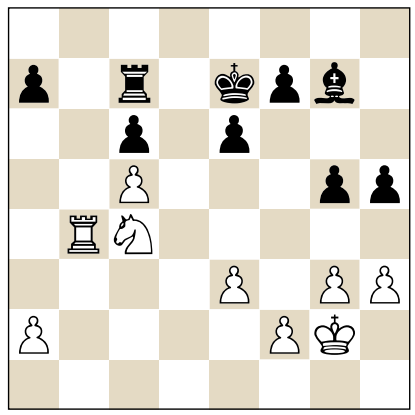
26...♗g7 27.♖b4!?

Also extremely tempting was 27.♘d6+ ♔e7 28.f4, preventing ...♗e5 once and for all, since it leaves White completely in control with the dominant knight on d6, but I felt trading pawns could bring Black closer to a potentially desperate escape.

27...♔e7

After 27...♗f8, White keeps the c5-pawn intact with 28.♖b8+!.

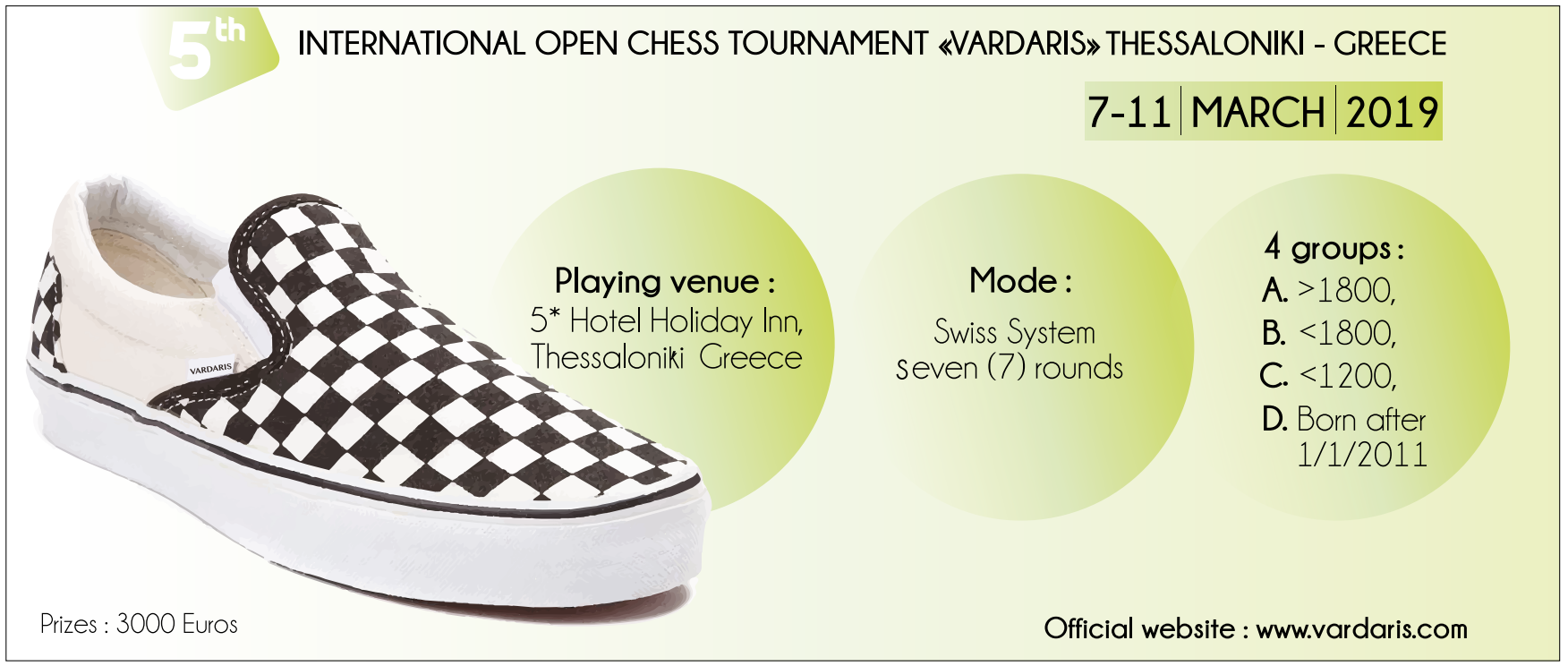
28.e3!

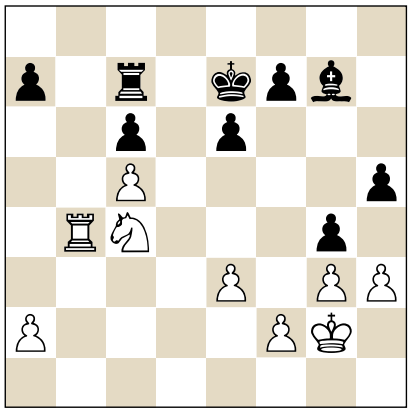


The key move. I want ♖b8 and ♘d6, but first I have to dominate the black bishop and avoid the attack on the c5-pawn.

28...g4

Not having many sensible moves left, Black goes for a natural pawn push. 28...f5 was an alternative, but there, too, it would be hard to suggest a move after 29.♖b8. On the other hand, it would avoid the 29.a4 idea, because Black would be in time with 29....♗f8 30.♖b8 ♔f7!, with counterplay.





29.hxg4?

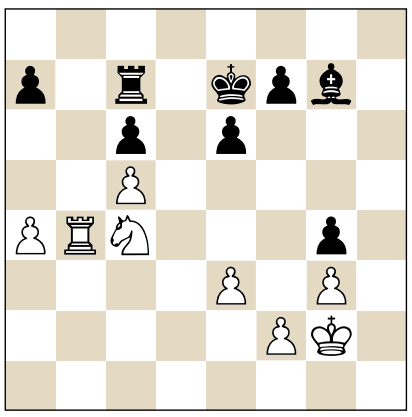
My original intention was not to trade the pawns and send the rook to pick up the kingside with ♖b8-♖g8-g5, but when I noticed the idea of a4!, I decided to clarify the situation on the kingside, because I saw the g4-pawn hanging in some of the variations I had calculated.

In fact, the computer points out that it is more relevant to keep the weak h5-pawn alive and go a4 first, correctly claiming that there is a big difference.

So, 29.a4!. The importance of keeping the h5-pawn on the board is relevant in the following line: 29...f5 30.♖b8 ♗f6 31.a5 e5 32.♘d6 ♔e6 33.a6 ♗e7 (33...e4! keeps the struggle going) 34.♘e8! gxh3+ 35.♔xh3 ♖d7 36.♘g7+! ♔f6 37.♘xh5+.

But even if you didn't see this exact line, it was still possible to figure that it was better to avoid the pawn trade and eliminate an extra weakness in Black's position.

29...hxg4 30.a4!



A very strong and unpleasant idea to face. Allowing a5-a6 looks lost on general grounds, but as it often turns out after extensive analysis, defensive resources often prevail, even in the ugliest of times.

30...a5?

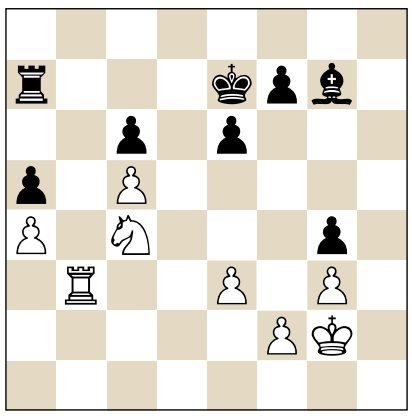
Black should have played 30...f5! 31.♖b8 ♗f6 32.a5 e5! 33.a6 (33.♘d6 ♔e6 34.♘e8 ♖e7, and the computer once again manages to find harmony in the ugliest of positions. The 3500-rated player will eventually escape here, too) 33...♔e6 34.♖b7 ♗d8. Just in time to hold the stuff together. White can keep exerting pressure here with ideas like e4 or f4, but it further simplifies the position, and judging by the computer evaluation, Black will most likely escape eventually.

31.♖b3!

Key. Allowing ...♗c3-b4 would be a terrible idea. Now the bishop is nicely dominated and Black immediately regrets his last move.

31...♖a7?

Extremely passive. Black can't save his pawns this way; it would have been better to do something desperate: 31...♔d7 32.♘xa5 ♗f8, with some chances to survive, but already a pawn down and on the verge of losing.



32.♖b6!

Provoking the king to go to d7 first is a good idea, since ♘b6+ will become a threat later on. The engine points out that ♔f1-e2 was extremely strong as well. Black can't regroup to attack the c5-pawn, even given these two tempi.

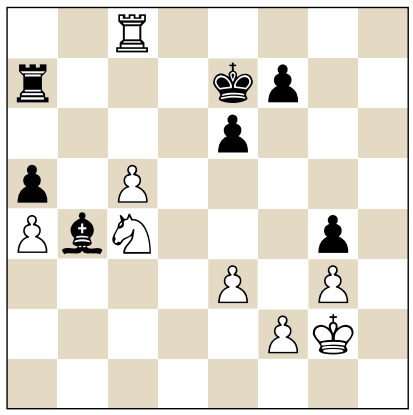
32...♔d7 33.♖b8 ♔e7 34.♖c8

Finally the pawn falls and, what is important, Black's pieces are still dominated.

34...♗c3 35.♖xc6 ♗b4

It was tougher to stop ♖c8 and lose more tempi with 35...♔d7 36.♖d6+ ♔e7, but the position looks so lost that I guess my opponent no longer believed in miracles.

36.♖c8



Black resigned. An early resignation, but Black is indeed lost.

There was one pretty line left behind the curtains: 36...♔d7!? 37.♘b6+ ♔e7 38.c6 ♔d6!?, forcing White to find the beautiful 39.♘a8!, and with 40.c7 a definite threat, it is really time to resign. Truly a model game, and one that reminded me of earlier victories against Peter Leko and Veselin Topalov, in similar fashion.

■ ■ ■

That meant that Anish moved up to shared 1st place, with the encounter between Yu Yangyi and MVL deciding who would take the title. Playing aggressively, the Chinese GM got chances but MVL kept a cool head and held the draw. And so, due to the better tiebreak, first place went to the Frenchman, who edged out Giri and Ding Liren.

I would love to tell you about the closing ceremony and the activities organized on the following day, but due to some nasty stomach bug I spent the last few days mostly in my hotel room. Rumour has it, though, that there are some excellent karaoke singers among the participants of the 2018 Shenzhen Masters! ■

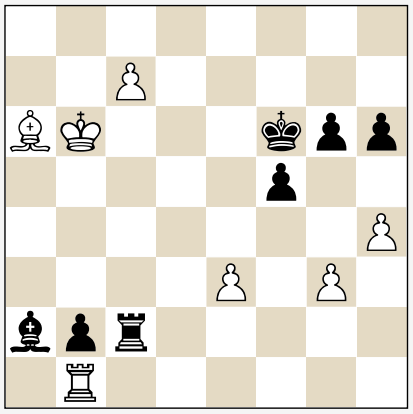
MAXIMize your Tactics

with Maxim Notkin

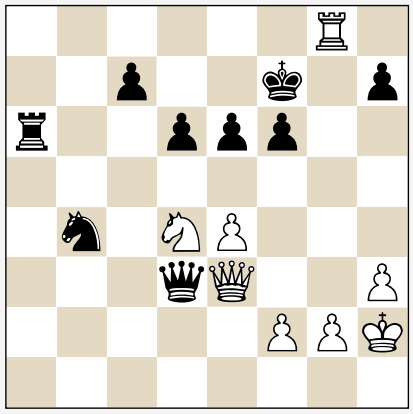
NEW IN CHESS * TRAINING *

Find the best move in the positions below

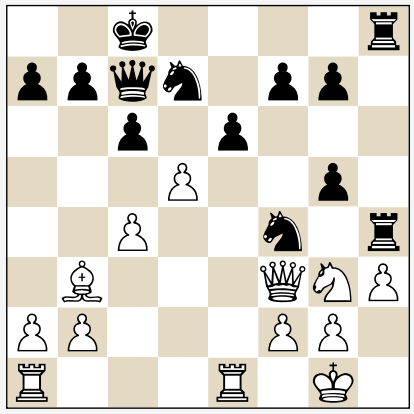
Solutions on page 93



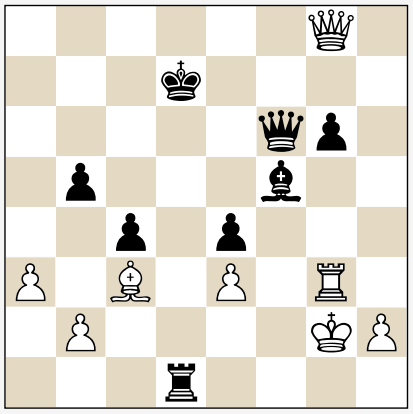
1. White to play



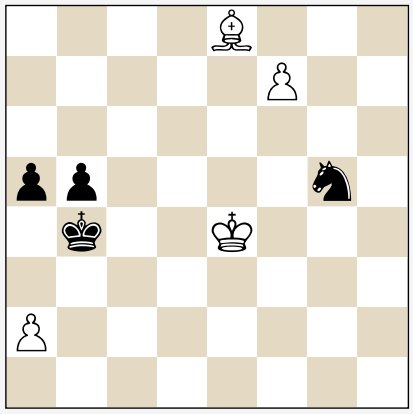
2. White to play



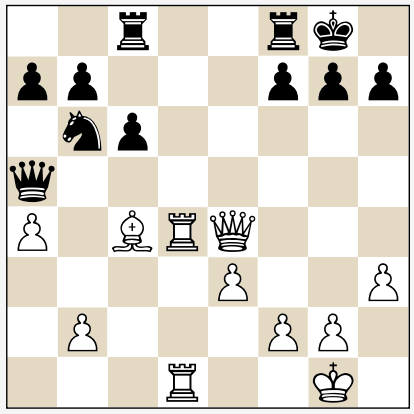
3. Black to play



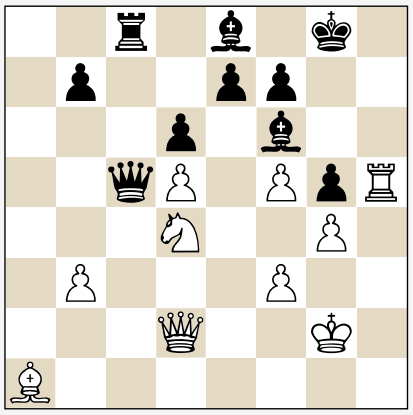
4. Black to play



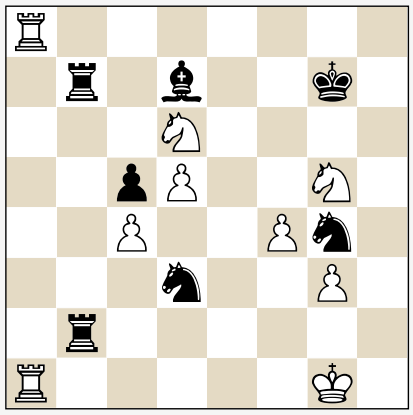
5. White to play



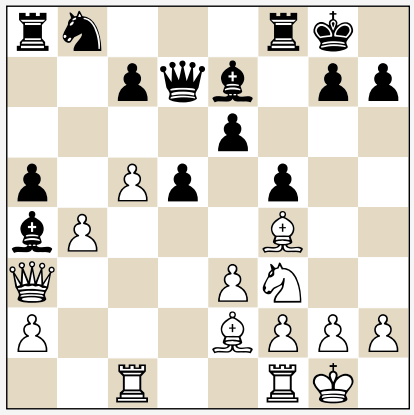
6. White to play



7. White to play



8. Black to play



9. White to play

Judit Polgar

Crucial moments

If all chess contests took a logical course, free of technical and psychological mistakes, devoid of doubt and hesitation, there would be far less interest for our favourite game. But in chess, as in life, as **JUDIT POLGAR** shows, there are these moments, and they can have far-reaching consequences.

These so-called crucial moments can turn fairy tales into tragedies and vice versa, because they radically change a previous tendency and lead to a result opposite to what was expected earlier on. In extreme cases, such moments can transcend the restricted sphere of a game or match and have a strong impact on the later careers of the players involved.

These crucial moments add spice to the game of chess and have ensured its persistent popularity over the centuries. For this column, I have selected a few illustrative examples that marked crucial moments in World Championship matches and the World Championship cycle.

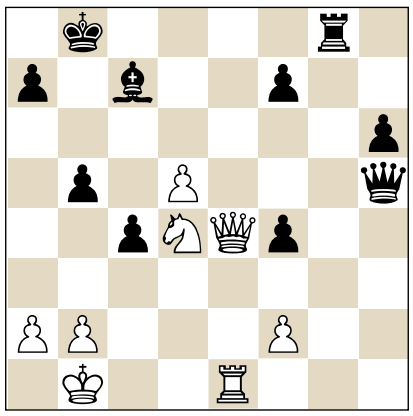
In the beginning of the third Millennium, Peter Leko had some of his best years ever. He was in fantastic form at the Dortmund Candidates' tournament in 2002, which he won, and in the 2004 world title match against Vladimir Kramnik in Brissago. The first part of the match was evenly balanced, but the Hungarian took the lead with a brilliant win with Black in Game 8. This must have come as a strong psychological shock to Kramnik, who had been following his home analysis for a long time, only to find out over the board that it was flawed.

In the subsequent games, the defending champion seemed to be trying, but he was failing to find his rhythm again, and this should have inspired the Challenger to try and increase his advantage. But Leko seemed to be happy with his +1 score, and in Games 9 and 11 he made two short draws with White.

Such a match strategy is always dangerous, because you risk losing your good form and are offering your opponent the possibility to recover. However, the really crucial moment occurred in Game 12, with just two games to go.

'Such moments can transcend the restricted sphere of a game or match and have a strong impact on the later careers of the players involved.'

Vladimir Kramnik
Peter Leko
Brissago 2004 (WC match-12)

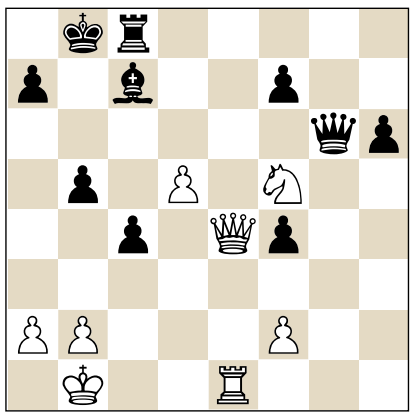


position after 34.♘d4

Kramnik's efforts to shake up the position had cost him two pawns. After playing the strongest move **34...♕g6!** Leko offered a draw – a consistent continuation of his overall policy since he had taken the lead. And Kramnik accepted.

But in this final position, Black actually has excellent winning chances. The only way for White to avoid a joyless

ending is 35.♘f5 (35.♘xb5? allows the tactical blow 35...♖e8! 36.♕xg6 ♖xe1+ 37.♔c2 fxg6, winning) 35...♖c8!.



This prepares for defending c4, planning ...♗d6 without fearing a2-a4. White has little or no compensation for the missing pawns.

I was watching the game live and was very upset when a draw was agreed.

‘I had the distinct feeling that Leko would be punished for his lack of resoluteness, and the final two games proved me right.’

I had the distinct feeling that Leko would be punished for his lack of resoluteness, and the final two games proved me right. It is hard to say whether Leko collapsed after realizing what a golden opportunity he had missed, or if Kramnik regained confidence after receiving such a present.

In any case, what happened is that in the next game, Game 13, he pressed the Challenger for a long time, and in the last game, Game 14, he scored a sound victory, levelling the score and retaining his title as per the rules.

This may be a subjective assessment, but I would say that after this match Leko never recovered properly and never reached his previous level again.

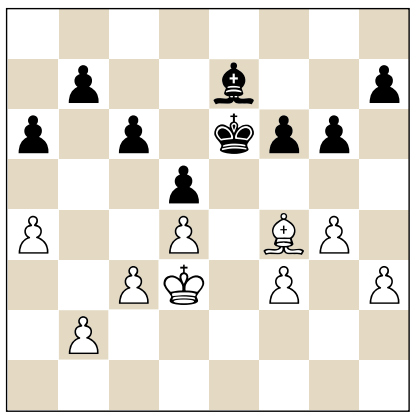
A wise decision

Paradoxically, a fightless draw can sometimes be a highly inspired psychological decision. I believe that the World Championship match against Sergey Karjakin in New York two years ago, presented Magnus Carlsen with some of the most stressful moments of his entire career. After missing excellent winning chances in Games 3 and 4, and pushing too hard in Game 8, he found himself trailing by a point. Then the champion managed to pull himself together in Game 10 and levelled the score.

Before the last classical game, Game 12, in which Carlsen was going to play with the white pieces, a day off had been scheduled. We can safely assume that Karjakin spent that day preparing against several variations likely to pop up. Things are, indeed, difficult when you are Black in the final game.

But Carlsen took a wise decision. Instead of wasting energy on trying to crack the Berlin Defence, he spent the day off relaxing and getting focused for the rapid play-off. He played the final classical game without any ambition, exchanging one piece after another. The game continued until the below position had been reached, only because of the 30-move rule, after barely two hours, and at White’s proposal the game was drawn.

Magnus Carlsen
Sergey Karjakin
New York 2016 (WC match-12)



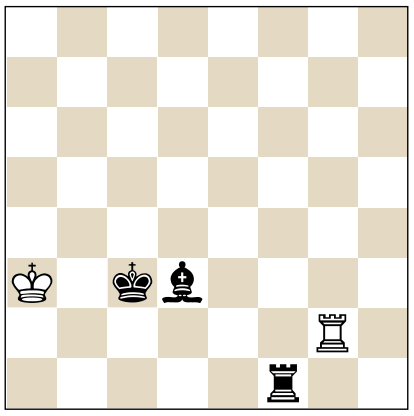
position after 30.♗e7

The spectators were so disappointed that the organizers offered them free access to the rapid games in order to compensate them for the last game’s lack of thrill. As a result of his relaxed day off, Carlsen won the rapid tiebreak convincingly, giving himself a very beautiful birthday present!

Random consequences

The outcome of crucial moments is not always dictated by the quality of a player’s approach. It can also be the random consequence of time-trouble, tiredness, stress... During the 2011 World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk, I had a most dramatic match with Leinier Dominguez. After losing the first game with White I fought like a lioness in Game 2 to level the score and make it to the rapid games. The middlegame and early endgame had featured inaccuracies on both sides, but I eventually got a theoretical winning position that I had known since I was a kid. And yet, with the clock ticking down to two minutes (plus 30-second increment) I needed many moves before I remembered the correct set-up. The most confusing element was that the enemy king was on the side of the board, not on the back rank as it is in the books!

Leinier Dominguez
Judit Polgar
Khanty-Mansiysk 2011 (2)



position after 85.♖g2

85...♖h1?

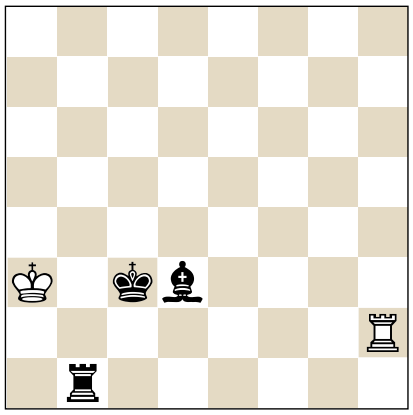
The start of the winning manoeuvre is 85...♖b1!, putting White into zugzwang, but I got this position only on move 106!

86.♖b2 ♖a1+ 87.♖a2 ♖b1 88.♖g2

The same position as mentioned above, but unfortunately it is my turn to move.

88...♖b3+ 89.♔a4 ♖b4+ 90.♔a3

♖b6? 90...♖b1!. **91.♖g4 ♖a6+ 92.♖a4 ♖b6 93.♖g4 ♖b7 94.♖h4 ♖b1 95.♖h2**



95...♖b6? The winning set-up is reached with 95...♗f1!, but I got it only on move 107!

96.♖h4 ♗f1 I apparently started to remember some vague contours, but still did not have a clear picture.

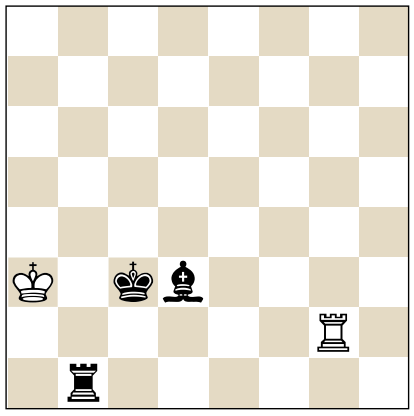
97.♖g4 ♖b5 98.♖g3+ ♗d3 99.♖g4 ♖b1 100.♖g2 ♖b3+ 101.♔a4 ♖b5 102.♖g4 ♖f5 When I realized that we had had this same position 20 moves ago, I started to become nervous.

103.♔a3 ♖f1 104.♖g2 ♖b1

I finally placed the first jigsaw piece correctly.

105.♖h2 ♗f5? But the second one creates a symmetrical position. Immediately after moving I remembered the correct move in a flash! But it could have been too late...

106.♖g2 ♗d3



107.♖h2??

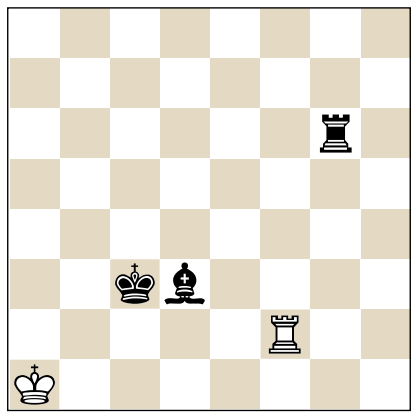
The crucial moment of the game and essentially of the whole match. Instead of executing this move, Dominguez should have stopped the clock, written the move down and indicated to the arbiter that it leads to three-fold repetition. He had been staring at his scoresheet for about 20 moves, obviously in search of a saving repetition, but was not absolutely sure about this moment. A faulty draw claim would result into a time-increment for me, with the increased possibility that I would find the correct continuation. If he had known that I had already recalled my old endgame theory, he might have taken the risk, though...

107...♗f1!

Yes!!

108.♖f2 ♗c4 109.♖f3+ ♗d3 110.♖f2 ♖b3+ 111.♔a2 In case of 111.♔a4 ♖b6 White cannot transfer his rook to the f-file.

111...♖b6 112.♔a1 ♖g6



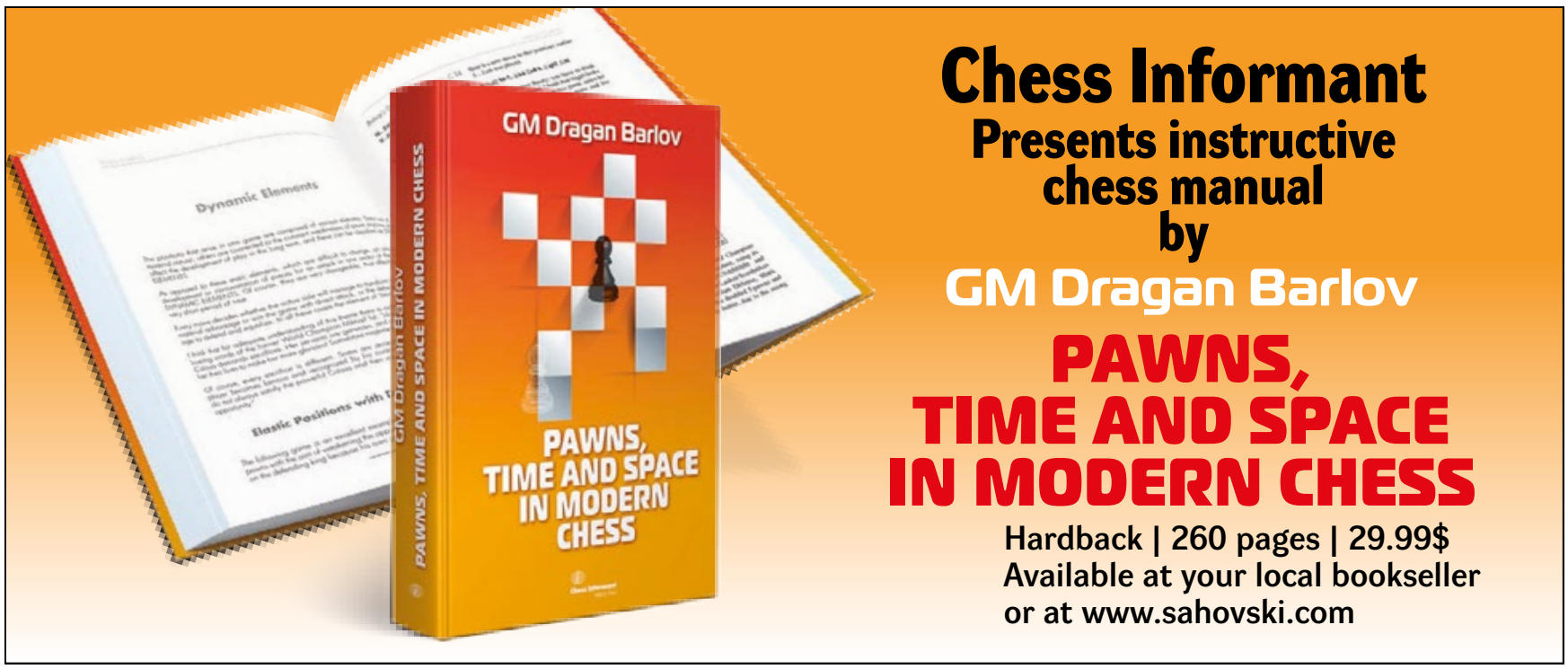
White resigned. He could still have tried the amusing 113.♖g2, but after 113...♖e6, mate could not be avoided anyway.

After this dramatic endgame I started the play-off with a clear psychological advantage and won after a fierce fight.

Conclusion

■ Identifying a crucial moment and understanding what it actually means is a big challenge even for the strongest players.

■ No matter whether you are aware of the crucial moment before or after it occurs, the best you can do is to maintain the correct psychological attitude. ■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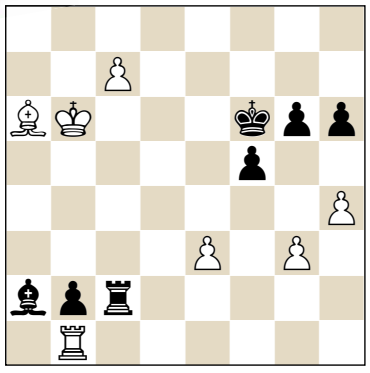
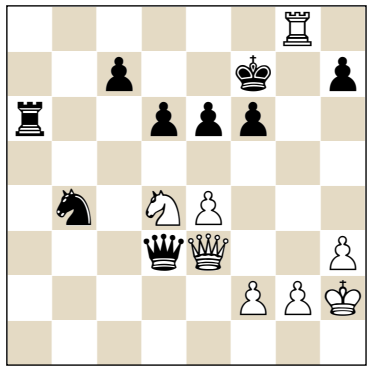


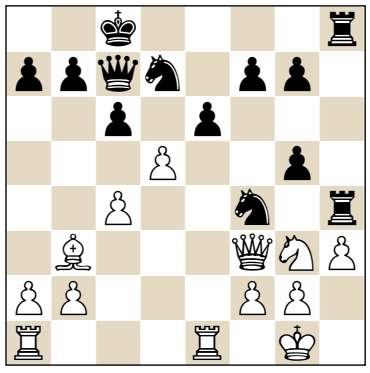
1. D. Fernandez-Pritchett
Hull 2018

44.♗c4! ♖xc4 Both captures allow promotion. **45.♖xb2** Black lost his passer while the white one will cost him the rook, so he resigned.



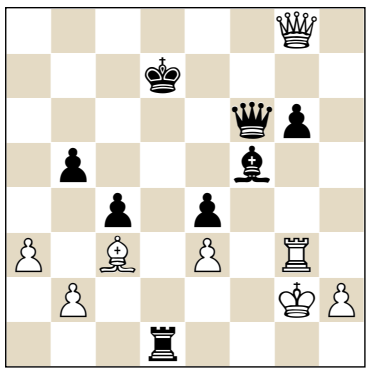
2. Schroeder-Samolins
Riga 2018

32.♕h6! ♔xg8 33.♘xe6 ♔f7 34.♕f8+! ♔xe6 Less spectacular is 34...♔g6 35.♕g7+ ♔h5 36.♕xh7 mate. **35.♕e8** mate!



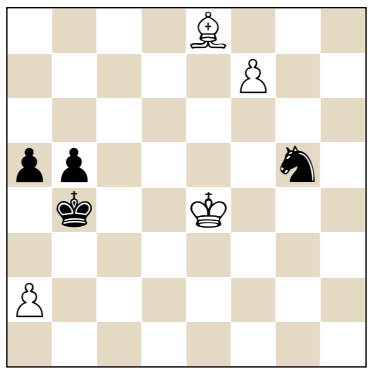
3. Lugovskoy-Riazantsev
Chelyabinsk (rapid) 2018

21...g4! 22.hxg4 ♘e2+! White resigned. After 23.♕xe2 (or 23.♔f1 ♘d4 and 24...♖h1+) 23...♖h1+! 24.♘xh1 ♕h2+ he is mated.



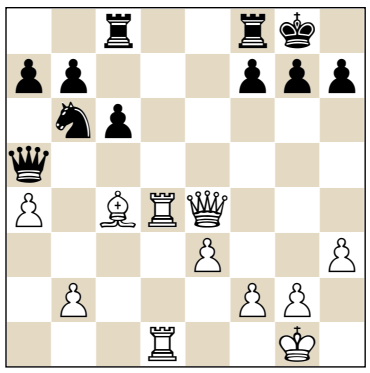
4. Harsha-Maghsoodloo
Manavgat 2018

37...♗h3+! 38.♔xh3 After 38.♖xh3, 38...♕f1+ 39.♔g3 ♕f3+ 40.♔h4 ♕h5+ 41.♔g3 ♕g5+ mates on f1. **38...♕f5+** White resigned on account of 39.♖g4 ♕h5+ 40.♔g3 ♖g1+ 41.♔f2 ♕xh2+.



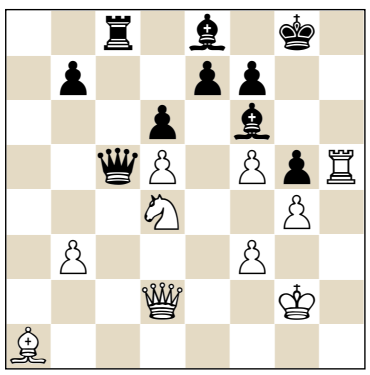
5. Vorobiov-Pajeken
Dresden 2018

If 48.♔d4, 48...♘xf7, ...a4 and ...♔a3, ...b4-b3 draws. **48.♔d5! ♘xf7** 48...♘h7 49.♗d7 ♔a3 50.♗f5. **49.♗xf7 ♔a3** 49...a4 50.♔c6 ♔a5 51.♔c5 b4 52.♗c4!. **50.♔c5! b4 51.♗b3 a4 52.♔c4!** Black resigned.



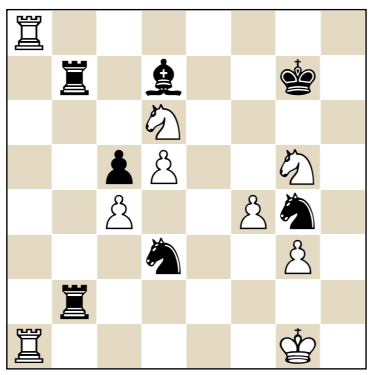
6. Inarkiev-Malakhov
Croatia 2018

19.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 19...♖xf7 20.♖d8+ ♖f8 21.♕e6+ ♔h8 22.♕xc8!. **20.♕xh7 ♕g5 21.♖f4+ ♔e6 22.h4** Black resigned. A nice mating line is 20.♖d7+! ♘xd7 21.♖xd7+ ♔f6 (21...♔g8 22.♕e7) 22.♖d6+ etc.



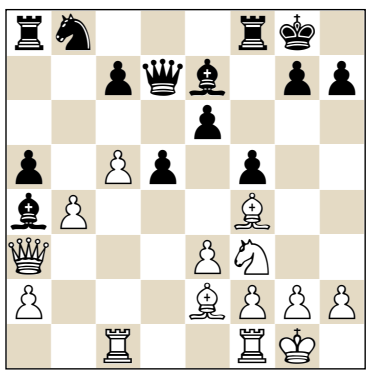
7. Iturrizaga-Warmerdam
Vlissingen 2018

37.♘c6! 37.♘e6? ♕c2!. **37...♗xc6** Black is checkmated after 37...bxc6 (or 37...♗xa1) 38.♕xg5+!. **38.♕xg5+! ♔f8 39.♗xf6 ♔e8** 39...exf6 40.♕xf6 and mate. **40.♕g8+ ♔d7 41.dxc6+** And since 41...♕xc6 42.♕xf7 is hopeless, Black resigned.



8. A. Smirnov-Chigaev
Chelyabinsk (rapid) 2018

47...♘e3! Threatening 48...♖g2+ with mate. **48.♖8a2** 48.♘de4 ♖g2+ 49.♔h1 ♖bb2 50.♘f3 ♘f2+ 51.♘xf2 ♖gxf2 gives Black a winning advantage. **48...♖a7!** The Maltese Cross! **49.♘e6+** Or 49.♘f5+ ♔f6. **49...♔g8** White resigned.



9. Georgiev-Noritsyn
Batumi Olympiad 2018

19.c6! ♗xc6 Black played 19...axb4?. **20.♘e5 ♕e8 21.♘xc6 ♘xc6 22.♗b5 axb4 23.♕d3!** 23.♕b2 ♗f6 24.♕b1 ♗c3. **23...♖a3 24.♕d1!** Not 24.♕d2 ♖c3 25.♖xc3 bxc3 26.♕xc3 ♘d4!. **24...♖c3 25.♖xc3 bxc3 26.♕a4** Winning a piece!

Hans Ree

The joy of miraculous escapes

After many years of absence **HANS REE** recently ventured to enter a serious tournament once again and enjoyed the experience. Happy memories from half a century ago were awoken from their slumber.

Halfway through the Sinquefield Cup tournament last August, Levon Aronian mentioned a Russian saying purporting that those who will not take a risk, will not drink champagne. In the last round, Aronian took a tremendous risk against Alexander Grischuk with a speculative rook sacrifice. Fortune favoured the brave. He won the game and shared first place in the tournament with Carlsen and Caruana. Asked what his favourite brand of champagne was, he answered, after some deliberation, that he liked Krug. A great endorsement from a winner, and I think the company should reward him with at least his weight in champagne. I had never heard of that brand, but now I'll have it in mind for New Year's Eve.

Around the same time I read a story by the great Isaac Babel (entitled *My first fee*), about an innkeeper from Odessa who was blinded by caution. Blinded by caution is an expression that I had not come across very often, but I could relate to it, because it seemed an apt comment on the ways of a timid chess player. Many is the time that, blinded by caution, I missed good chances or even agreed to a draw in a superior position. It wasn't like that when I started to play. During the early years, you don't see real dangers. Later you do, but then you also tend to see imaginary ones.

This doesn't apply to everyone. Aronian quoted Bent Larsen: 'By taking risks you will win games and you will lose games, but you will remember the games you won.' Surely this was true... for Larsen.

Emanuel Lasker wrote about 'the passion that whips the blood when great stakes can be gained by resolute and self-confident daring', something he thought his rival Siegbert Tarrasch was lacking. I have no doubt that taking risks, the exhilarating feeling of going all-in, contributes to the happiness that chess can provide.

Fleeting happiness

I was a bit surprised to see a rather sad remark by Ljubomir Ljubojevic in the Fair & Square section of the previous issue of New In Chess: 'I have won many games that have not made me happy and when I lose, I am also not happy. My friends ask "so when are you happy?" That's the way chess is: you are happy only rarely; the rest is grief.'

Even though Ljubo has occasionally been lamenting that chess has become exhausted and creativity has been undermined by the influence of computers, I had always considered him a joyful player. I don't know when and where he made that sad comment, nor whether it is representative of his general feeling.

I must confess that, through the years, I have written much more about the grief of chess than about its joys. One reason is that it is easier to write about failure and grief than about happiness. Happiness is a fleeting moment, often not noticed while it happens, that can turn into a happy memory, whereas grief will continue to gnaw at you for quite some time. Writing about joy and happiness is inevitably tinged by Friedrich Nietzsche's insight that all happiness wants eternal duration and will not get it.

The novel *Ada* by my hero Vladimir Nabokov is ostensibly about happiness, but on closer inspection the happiness turns out to be based on moral indifference and cruelty. The

happy and charming Van Veen, the novel's protagonist, is a monster, said Nabokov himself.

Max Euwe was once asked on Dutch television what he felt when he was cheered by a big Amsterdam crowd after becoming World Champion in 1935. He said that his thought had been: 'Now I am supposed to feel very happy.'

Despite the fleeting nature of happiness and all my past moaning about the pain that chess can cause, in retrospect my memories of happiness stand out. Not so much about wins after risk-taking, as it was for the valiant warrior Bent Larsen, but about escapes from almost desperate situations – to have been in the belly of the beast and stepped out unharmed is truly exhilarating.

Moving your chair

After a long abstention I took part in a real tournament again last August: the Hogeschool Zeeland tournament in Vlissingen. My result was as mediocre, to put it mildly, as I had expected it to be, but I still liked it; not only the daily walks along the seaside boulevard, but also the play, which was only mildly stressful because of my low expectations.

I lost one game, against the Indian grandmaster Sandipan Chanda. He was staying in the same hotel as I was, and every day at dinner, to my great pleasure, I saw him reading the fine biography of Max Euwe by Alexander Münninghoff. He said he enjoyed it because it was not only a portrait of a man, but also of an era.

I had one game in Vlissingen that made me especially happy, although its quality was pretty awful. As Black, I obtained a clear advantage early in the game, but after several blunders I was lost. At some point, the computer's evaluation goes up to +7.40 for my opponent.

Never give up. Plodding on, I managed to reach an endgame in which I had to defend with a rook against rook + bishop. I had done this successfully once before, but that had been at a leisurely rate of play. Gentle reader, I can assure you that defending this endgame on an increment of 30 seconds per move is no laughing matter.

Defending when the attacker moves his pieces vertically, from the bottom to the top, seems relatively easy, since the position might resemble a diagram in a manual. But what if the attacker moves his forces horizontally, trying to force the defending king to the a-file or h-file? While playing, I remembered an old report describing how a defender shifted his chair 90 degrees in order to be able to look at the board from a different perspective – not top to bottom but left to right. But for me, living on increments, this was impossible, of course.

When I had finally saved the draw, I saw that it was past midnight and that we were the only players left in the hall, with a few arbiters who had meticulously kept score. I was told that the endgame had occurred earlier in the tournament and that the defender had lost. I felt heroic.

About a month later, at the Champions Showdown in St. Louis, the same endgame was successfully defended in a blitz game against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave by Sam Shankland, who was playing on increments of 5 seconds per move. I was deeply impressed. Compared with that, I had had plenty of time, but to me it still felt like severe time-trouble.

Viktor embraces a pillar

I remembered other occasions in which I did well in extreme time-trouble, e.g. Ree-Glauser, Groningen European Junior Championship 1964/65. When I looked at that game recently, I found that while my last seconds were ticking away, the computer evaluation, if it had existed at that time, had dropped to -3 to my disadvantage, but I still won. Or Ree-Uhlmann, Amsterdam 1970, in which in retrospect it had dropped to -11, with practically no time left. You can't have it all, and this ended only in a draw.

I have won some decent games in my time, and of some of them I am proud. Yet these two time-scrambles with their lucky outcome stand out in my memory. It is a far cry from the heroic risk-taking by Aronian and Larsen that I mentioned earlier. There was nothing voluntary about the predicaments in which I found myself; they just happened to me.

'Happiness is a fleeting moment, often not noticed while it happens, that can turn into a happy memory, whereas grief will continue to gnaw at you.'

We can't all be great heroes, but when I played over these two games recently, with the computer as my annotator, I smiled at their absurdity, and although they took place half a century ago, I still felt happy.

Not to compare myself to the demigods, but I am in good company. I still remember Viktor Kortchnoi at the 1966 Olympiad in Havana embracing a pillar in the tournament room and bursting out laughing after surviving an extreme time-scramble against the Bulgarian Georgi Tringov, who, after missing several forced mates, could still have been a queen up. Later I often saw Viktor after he had won a super-tournament or a Candidates match, but I have never seen him so jubilant as then. ■

The Blitz Whisperer

Maxim Dlugy

Closing time

Reaching a winning position is one thing, bringing home the bacon another, especially in blitz. **MAXIM DLUGY** looks at the art of 'closing' 'totally won' games, positions that would be resignable in classical chess, but often require added effort and concentration when you have very little time on the clock.

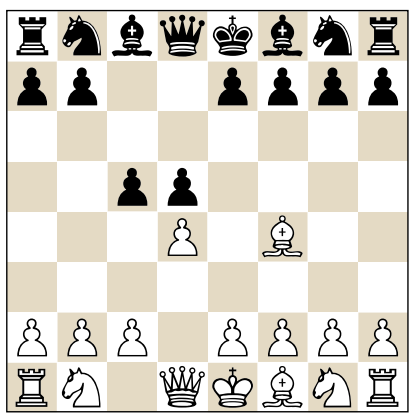
One of the most important traits of a good blitz player is the ability to close the deal and win a winning position. In essence, this may sound simple, but it is not. Far from it. Of late, I have been hooked on the TV series *Suits*, in which the main protagonist, attorney Harvey Spector, hails himself as the best closer in the city, with a near to 100% hit-to-miss ratio. As a result, I have started my own search for the best closer in blitz. My top candidates are Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura and Sergey Karjakin, and I closely follow their exploits to see who wins out in my book for not letting their opponents off the hook in winning positions.

While this process is on-going, and I will no doubt return to it in a later article, this time I would like to offer some of my own recent games to showcase some of the important elements for becoming a good 'closer'. To begin with let's take a look at this three-minute game played on chess.com between myself and ever-creative Hungarian grandmaster Richard Rapport, who goes under the handle of Lordillidan.

Maxim Dlugy
Lordillidan (Richard Rapport)
Chess.com Live Chess 2018
Queen's Pawn Opening

1.d4 d5 2.♗f4 c5

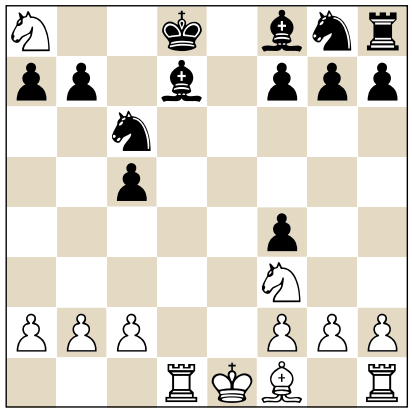
It can be fully expected that, no matter what opening system appears on the board, Richard Rapport is ready to spice it up with the most eccentric type of response. Objectively speaking, there is of course nothing wrong with this active reply, as long as Black knows what he is doing.



3.e4!? This active move, offering Black to transpose to an Albin Counter Gambit a tempo down after 3...dxe4 4.d5, is the most aggressive reaction.

3...♘c6 A playable alternative, which I have extensively analysed. Now the battle lines are drawn and we are in for a series of forced moves that will decide who comes out of the opening ahead.

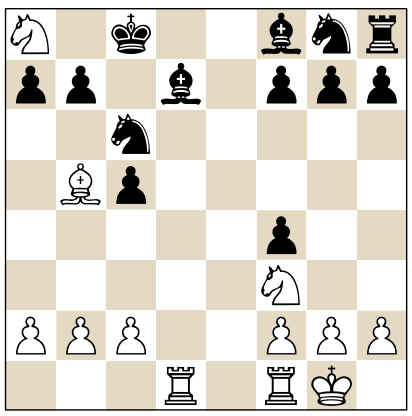
4.exd5 ♕xd5 5.♘c3 ♕xd4 6.♘d5 e5 7.♘c7+ ♔d8 8.♘xa8 exf4 9.♘f3 ♕xd1+ 10.♖xd1+ ♗d7



Out of four games in the database, Black has won two and drawn two from this position, so strong players would probably not spend too much time analysing this continuation. At one point while preparing my

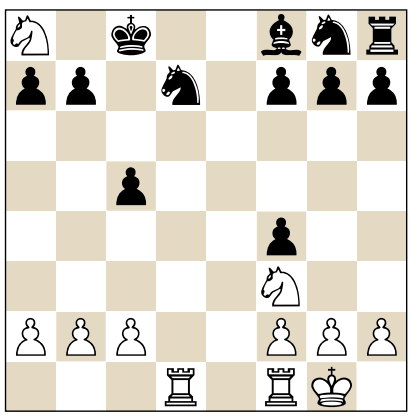
students, I spent some time looking into the intricacies of this tactical line and noticed that, in fact, Black has to be extremely careful if he wants to fully equalize.

11.♗b5 ♔c8 12.0-0



12...♘b8? Although this move seems to improve the position of Black's knight, which would have been captured if Black had played the natural 12...♗g4 to neutralize White's knight on f3, I knew there had to be something very wrong with this move, since it was not on the engine's radar when I was doing my analysis. When something like this happens, you need to concentrate your tactical abilities to find a winning shot. After the best option, 12...♗g4, I would have had to show my preparation.

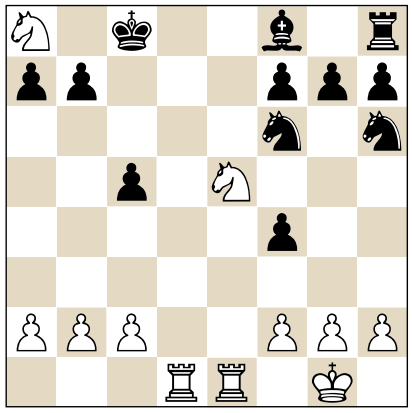
13.♗xd7+ ♘xd7



14.♖fe1 The most natural move, although the engine corrects me with the crushing 14.♖xd7 ♔xd7 15.♘e5+ ♔e8 16.♖e1 ♗e7 17.♘c7+ ♔d8 18.♘xf7+, and White wins.

14...♘df6 The more natural response 14...♘gf6 15.♘g5 b6 16.♘xf7 would force me to find 16...♖g8 17.♘g5 ♔b7 18.♘xh7 ♔xa8 19.♘xf8 ♖xf8 20.♖e7 g5 21.♖dxd7 ♘xd7 22.♖xd7, with a probably winning rook and pawn ending.

15.♘e5 ♘h6



16.♘d7! This crushing move, with the simple threat of 17.♘xf6, took me less than a second, since I had been expecting 15...♘h6 and was thinking about my response. Black cannot capture due to mate on e8, and it is hard to come up with a move for him.

16...♘hg4 17.h3 Simple and decisive. **17...♘e3 18.♘xf6**

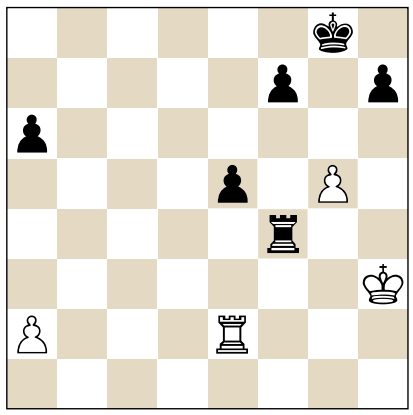
Black resigned.

NEW IN CHESS

On Chess.com Richard Rapport uses the handle Lordillidan. Fans of Warcraft video games and admirers of the Hungarian's love for dynamic and dangerous chess understand why.

As you can see, in a winning position we must concentrate on not losing the advantage by calculating effective tactical lines that will punish our opponents for their transgressions.

Genghis_K (Federico Perez)
Maxim Dlugy
Chess.com Live Chess 2018



position after 40.♖e2

Another important aspect of being a good closer is knowledge of basic endgames. In this game against Genghis_K, or rather the Argentinean

'No matter what opening system appears on the board, Richard Rapport is ready to spice it up with the most eccentric type of response.'

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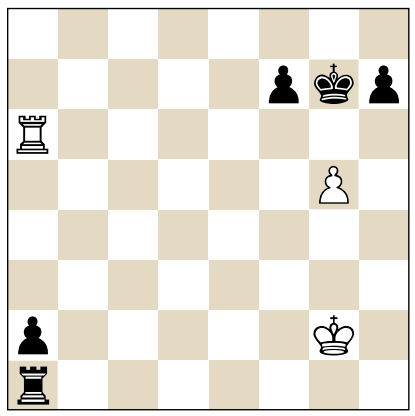
GM Federico Perez Ponsa, I reached the following position after White's 40th move. Since I knew the basic endgame idea, it was not a problem to finish off my opponent without giving him a second chance.

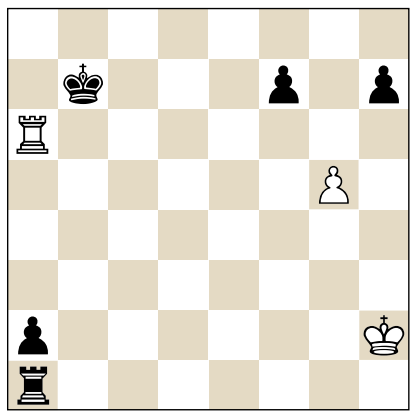
40...♖a4 41.♖xe5 ♖xa2 Black's plan is a simple three-step process:
1. Get the pawn to a2;
2. Trade the h-pawn for the g-pawn;
3. Advance the f-pawn to f3, setting up the skewer finale.

42.♖e7 a5 43.♖a7 ♔g7 44.♖a6 a4 45.♔g3 a3 46.♔f3 ♖a1 47.♔g2 a2



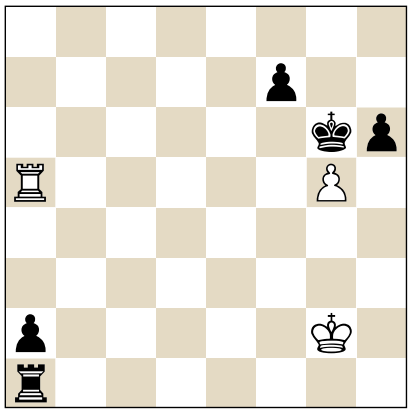
Step 1 has been completed.

48.♔h2 ♔f8 49.♔g2 ♔e7 50.♔h2 ♔d7 51.♔g2 ♔c7 52.♔h2 ♔b7



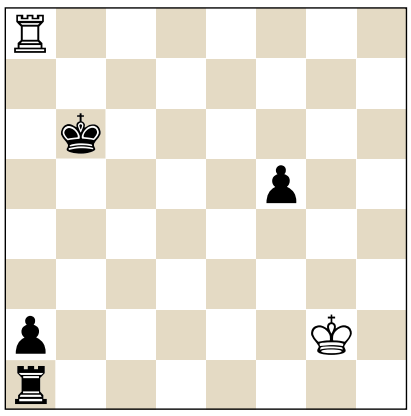
The rook is pushed off the third rank. It was, of course, possible and shorter to play ...h6 with the king on g7, since the h-pawn is not really helping White; but there was no reason to give White hope where no hope should exist.

53.♖a3 ♔c6 54.♖a5 ♔b6 55.♖a3 ♔c5 56.♔g2 ♔d4 57.♖a4+ ♔e5 58.♖a5+ ♔f4 59.♔h2 ♔g4 60.♔g2 ♔h5 61.♔h2 ♔g6 62.♔g2 h6 With the king on g6 instead of g7, White does not get the h-pawn for free. The extra 14 moves took me 14 seconds, which I could easily have spared myself.



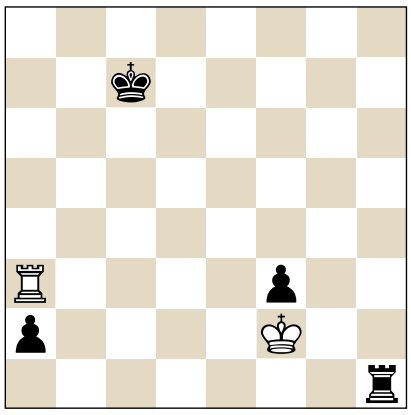
63.gxh6 ♔xh6 Step 2 is now complete.

64.♖a6+ ♔g7 65.♖a7 ♔f8 66.♖a8+ ♔e7 67.♖a7+ ♔d6 68.♖a6+ ♔c5 69.♖a5+ ♔b6 70.♖a8 f5



Implementing Step 3.

71.♖b8+ ♔c7 72.♖a8 f4 73.♖a3 f3+ 74.♔f2 ♖h1



Step 3 completed, just as promised... White resigned.

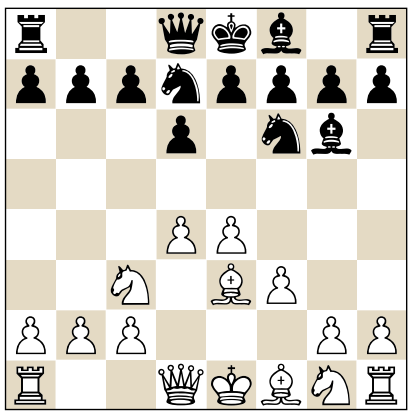
One of the main requirements of being a good closer is not to lose heart, no matter what hits you in a blitz game. It is quite natural to lose momentum and to find yourself defending after (perhaps seemingly) having had a

winning position. My suggestion is to keep playing as if you mean it. Your opponent will feel the pressure and will start making mistakes of his own.

This is precisely what happened in the next game, which I played against the 22-year-old American GM Daniel Naroditsky, one of the top three players as regards rating on chess.com. Let's take a look.

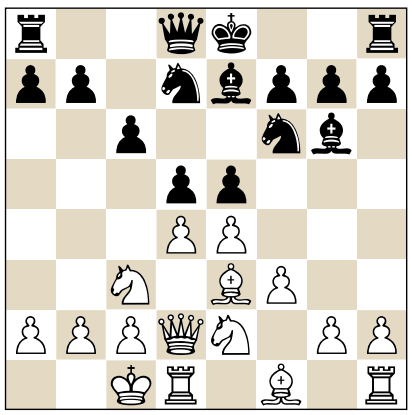
Maxim Dlugy
Daniel Naroditsky
Chess.com Live Chess 2018
Queen's Pawn Game

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗f4 d6 3.♘c3 ♗f5 4.f3 ♘bd7 5.e4 ♗g6 6.♗e3



The bishop on g6 looks slightly out of touch with the demands of the position, so White should have a comfortable advantage.

6...e5 7.♘ge2 c6 8.♕d2 ♗e7 9.0-0-0 d5



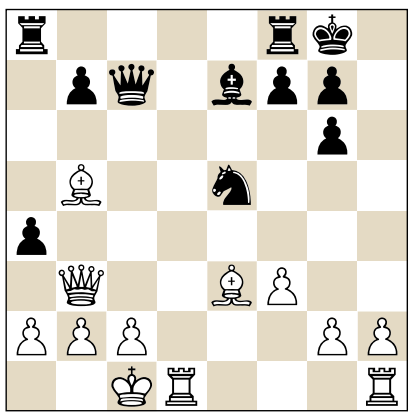
Daniel decides to open up his bishop, probably aware of the dangers involved in the advance of my g- and h-pawns on the kingside. Regrettably for Black, the weakness of his d-pawn will be quite telling.

10.exd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♘xe5

'One of the main requirements of being a good closer is not to lose heart, no matter what hits you.'

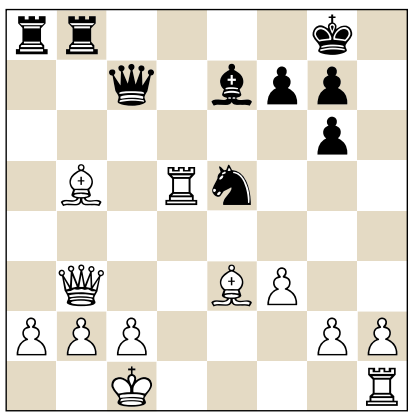
12.♘f4 0-0 13.♘xg6 Now that the bishop is alive – it should go.

13...hxg6 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♕xd5 ♕c7 16.♕b3 a5 17.♗b5 a4



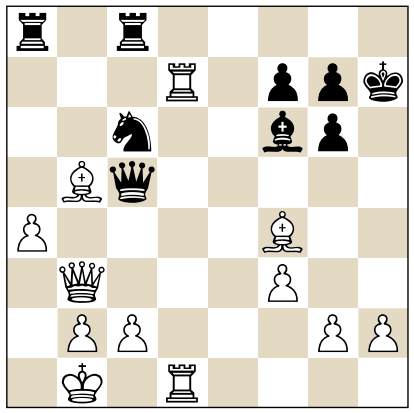
Daniel's blitz strength is that he always plays fast and active chess. This gets him good results against slower and more passive opponents. Since I rely mostly on my intuition, I try not to mull for too long over natural decisions, even when they look a little scary.

18.♗xa4 b5 19.♗xb5 ♖fb8 20.♖d5



Generally, playing a rook to a central square while protecting a three-pawn lead should be good enough for a decisive advantage. In fact, the engine gives White a 3.5 pawn advantage here.

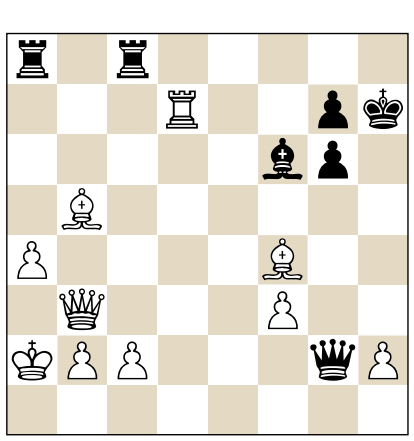
20...♗f6 21.♖hd1 ♔h7 22.a4 ♕e7 23.♗f4 ♖c8 24.♔b1 ♘c6 25.♖d7 ♕c5



Of course, I am completely winning here, and nudging the queen from the centre with 26.♗e3 or 26.♗d6 would have been quite decisive. Instead, I decided to get closer to Black's king with my queen, missing his natural counterplay.

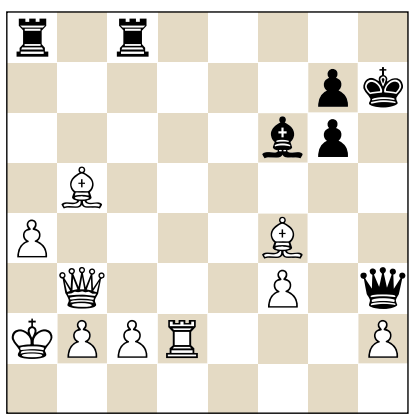
26.♕xf7 ♘e5! Confronted by Black's suddenly numerous threats, I realized that the only way to hold on to my advantage was to give up the exchange.

27.♕b3 ♘xd7 28.♖xd7 ♕g1+ 29.♔a2 ♕xg2

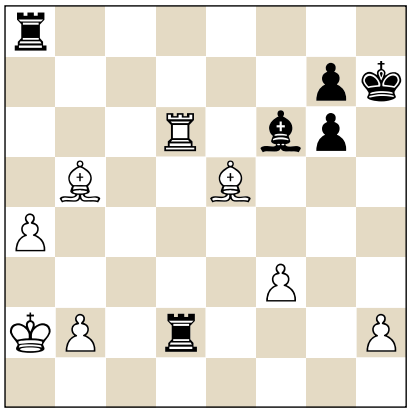


Here I stopped to take stock and thought for 22 seconds, the longest think in the game. I was choosing between bringing the rook or the bishop back to defend my c-pawn.

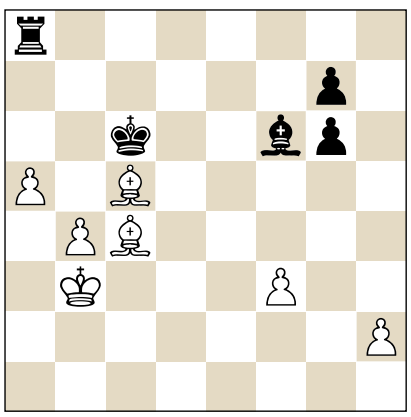
30.♖d2! ♕h3



31.♖d6?!
Active, but not the best move. After 31.♗d6 ♖d8 32.♖d3 I would have been ready to advance the c-pawn with a decisive advantage.
31...♕f5 32.♗e3 ♕xc2 33.♕xc2 ♖xc2 34.♗d4
It was a shame to lose the c-pawn, reducing my passed pawn armada to a mere two, but sometimes this is also enough to win. Black still has to play very carefully to hold the position.
34...♖d2 35.♗e5



35...♖xd6?
Not the best decision. The two bishops are quite powerful in helping the connected passed pawns to advance, especially with Black's king so far away. Black's defence lay in keeping both rooks.
After the best continuation, 35...♖f2 36.♗xf6 gxf6 37.♖xf6 ♔g7 38.♖d6 ♖xh2, it would be a tense and balanced endgame.
36.♗xd6 ♔g8 37.b4 ♔f7 38.♗c4+ ♔e8 39.a5 ♔d7 40.♗c5 ♔c6 41.♔b3?
A big mistake with very little time on the clock. 41.♗b6, protecting the a-pawn, would have been winning.



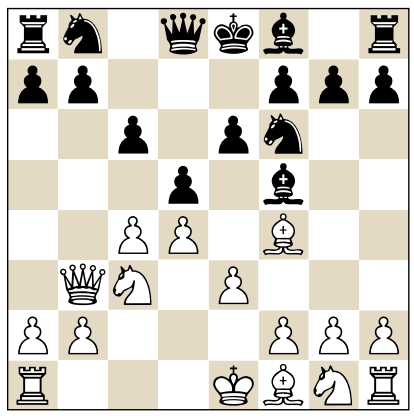
'My students know this position as Dream Position number 2, because Black has miserable results from here.'

41...♖h8? Black misses the chance to draw with 41...♖xa5! 42.bxa5 ♔xc5 and will now swiftly go down. My explanation for this is that Black was unprepared for any such opportunities, since he had been too busy defending during the entire game.
42.♗g1 ♗d8 43.b5+ ♔b7 44.a6+ ♔c7 45.b6+ ♔c6 46.b7 ♗c7 47.♗d3 ♗b6 48.♗e4+ ♔b5 49.a7
Black resigned.

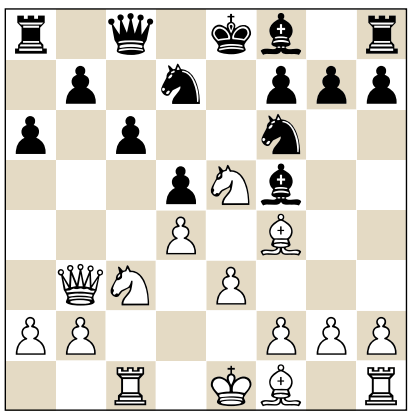
GM Andrey Esipenko is Russia's highest-rated 16-year-old player, with a FIDE blitz rating of 2634. In my games against him, I always feel that it will be difficult to keep up with him very soon, so it feels good when I can still give him a lesson. In the following game, Black's difficulties start in the opening, which leaves me with a clear-cut strategic plan. At one point, it looks as if I miss a step, but the weaknesses in Black's position give me enough tactical resources to keep a winning advantage.

Maxim Dlugy
Andrey Esipenko
Chess.com Live Chess 2018
Queen's Pawn Game

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗f4 d5 3.e3 ♗f5 4.c4 e6 5.♘c3 c6 6.♕b3

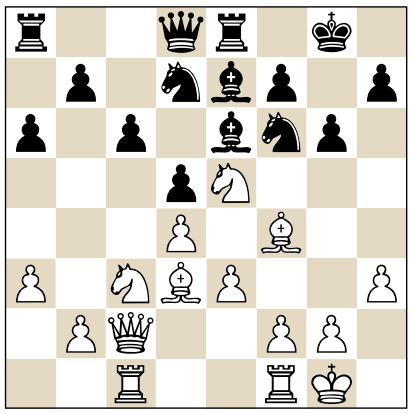


My students know this position as Dream Position number 2, because Black has miserable results from here, no matter what they play.
If you are sufficiently intrigued, Dream Position number 1 occurs after the moves 1.d4 d5 2.♗f4 ♘f6 3.e3 c6 4.c4!.
6...♕c8
This move has the dubious honour of providing the best result from this position, scoring a measly 36.8%. Compared to the most obvious-looking 6...♕b6, which scores less than 25%, this is a veritable success story.
7.♖c1 a6
Black's problem is that normal developing moves like 7...♗e7 run into 8.cxd5, when Black cannot recapture with the e6-pawn, since ♘b5! will win. After 8...♘xd5 9.♗g3 White has good central control without Black having any visible compensation, so White should be better.
8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘f3 ♘bd7 10.♘e5



10...♗e7
I will be able to capture with the d-pawn, followed by ♘xd5, but after 10...♘xe5 11.dxe5 ♘d7 12.♘xd5 ♗e6! 13.♘b6 ♕d8! it is Black who is on top. Therefore, White should meet 10...♘xe5 by taking on e5 with the bishop, with a slight advantage.
11.♗e2 0-0 12.h3 ♗e6 13.♕c2
This move relieves the pressure on the b-pawn, which Black immediately notices.
13...♕d8 14.0-0 ♖e8 15.♗d3 g6 16.a3 I now start the typical plan of

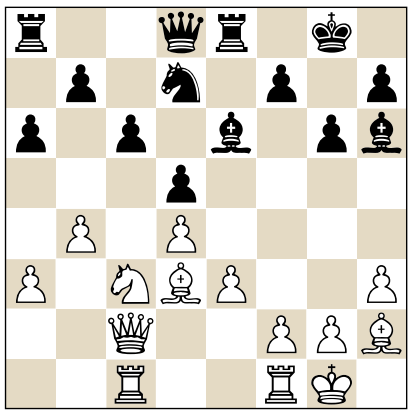
the minority attack. Black should meet this with standard play, but somehow Andrey messes up.



16...♘xe5 17.♗xe5 ♘d7 18.♗f4 ♗g5 19.♗h2 ♗h6

The purpose of this move is not very clear to me. It made more sense to play 19...a5 or 19...♖c8, anticipating my advance on the queenside.

20.b4



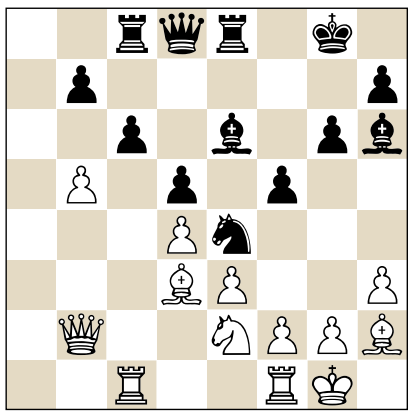
20...f5 I am not impressed by this advance either, since Black won't be in time to do something useful with the f-pawn and therefore simply bares his king without a reason.

Black should have gone 20...♘b6, planning to occupy the c4-square with the knight or to go 20...♗f8 to check the advance of White's queenside pawns. **21.♘e2**

Also inaccurate. It was time for 21.a4, with a slight advantage.

21...♘f6 22.a4 ♖c8 23.♕b2 ♘e4 24.b5 axb5 25.axb5

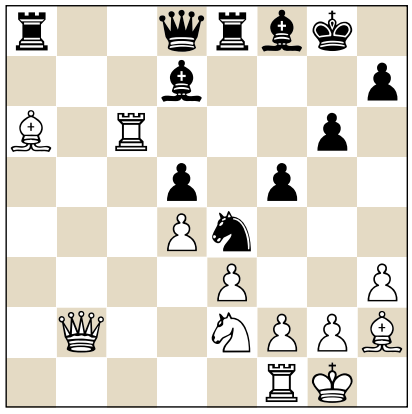
It looks pretty clear that Black's strategy of playing 'active-looking' moves has backfired. He should now try to defend at all cost with moves like ... ♕b6 or ...♗d7. Instead, he continues to play as if everything is hunky-dory.



25...♗f8

This attempt to trade off the dangerous h2-bishop comes too late.

26.bxc6 bxc6 27.♗a6 ♖a8 28.♖xc6 ♗d7



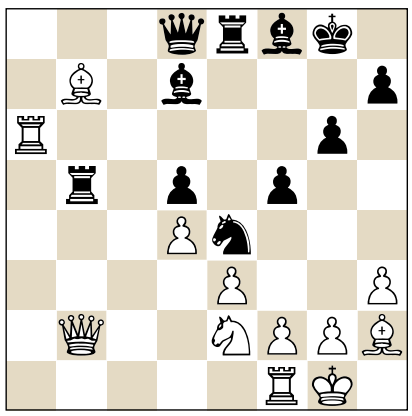
29.♗b7

This move happens to be good enough for a winning position, although 29.♗c7 would also have been strong.

29...♖a5 30.♖a6?

Missing 30.♗c7 is not normal, but what to do after...

30...♖b5



Here it is:

31.♕a2! Of course! The ugly effects of f5 start rearing their heads. The bishop is untouchable.

31...♘f6 32.♗e5! This is the closer! When your opponent is barely holding on, try to tip him over with an active move.

32...♗e6 33.♗c6 Black resigned.

As you can see, Black's loss in this game resulted from underestimating White's simple plan of the minority attack. Once it broke through, closing out the game with two exact moves was sufficient.

ETERI KUBLASHVILI

GM Andrey Esipenko is Russia's highest-rated 16-year-old player, with a FIDE blitz rating of 2634.

To summarize, this is what will turn you into a strong blitz player:

1. Opening Preparation.
2. Endgame Technique.
3. Unflinching resolve after losing a clear advantage.
4. Clear-cut strategic planning coupled with a good tactical vision. ■

Sadler on Books

Fascinating portrait of a restless genius

Before he delves into middlegames and openings, **MATTHEW SADLER** shares his enthusiasm for the first part of a 3-volume biography of second World Champion Emanuel Lasker. 'A treasure trove of information with a huge number of photos.'

A few weeks ago, the New In Chess editor asked me whether I had enough books to review. I hinted that it might be nice to receive a couple of books that weren't about openings, such as... a biography of a famous player perhaps... I felt a little like a small child going to see Father Christmas and hoping to receive the present of which it had been dreaming for months! Our editor may not have a long white beard or a fleet of reindeers, but he did suggest sending me *Emanuel Lasker – Volume I – Struggle and Victories – World Chess Champion for 27 Years* edited by Richard Forster, Michael Negele and Raj Tischbierek (Exzelsior Verlag). That's the one!

This is the first volume of a planned three-volume series covering all aspects of the great World Champion's life: chess (including problem compositions and endgame studies), mathematics and his attempts to secure an academic post, and his private life. The book is divided into a series of articles from many different contributors. We have a detailed description of Lasker's family tree, a fascinating chapter by Tony Gillam on Lasker's (sometimes less than convivial) stays in the United Kingdom, a thorough summary of Lasker's mathematical achievements (including formulas!) and last but not least, two chapters examining Lasker's chess prowess: one by Raj Tischbierek focusing on Lasker's battle against Tarrasch, the other by Mihail Marin looking through the highlights of Lasker's play up to 1916. This treasure trove of information is supplemented by a huge number of photos and rounded off with a classy hardback cover.

Juggling options

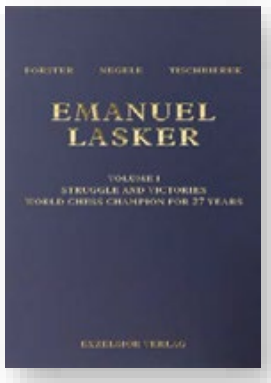
It's appropriate for this book to appear at the same time as the World Championship match, as Magnus Carlsen's play is often compared to that of Emanuel Lasker. Neither is seen as an openings specialist, while both are adept – in the words of Ray Keene – 'in juggling options to avoid any kind of clear equality'.

I have had a wonderful time reading this book and it amazed me how little I knew about Lasker. One of the things that still mystifies me is how Lasker could have become so strong (the same applies for Capablanca for that matter). Lasker learnt the rules of chess in 1880 at the age of 12, but, in his own words, only started to understand something about chess two years later when for roughly a year he did not attend school. And yet by 1890, Lasker travelled to London to challenge the leading British players, by 1892 he surpassed them in tournament play with a victory in the 7th Congress of the BCA, outdistancing Mason by 1½ points, as well as in the Quintangular Match against Blackburne, Mason, Gunsberg and Bird. By 1894 he was World Champion! Apart from his elder brother Berthold (who also became a strong player) he would have had little coaching while books would not have been of an advanced standard. Lasker said himself that 'Anyhow, I have learned very little from books. Intelligent trial and error – that was my method, and it remained that way. I have also made many blunders and mistakes with this method, but my possibly innate instinct for chess carried me forward. And so it happened that I did not totally go to the dogs and at that kept a passable sense of humour.'

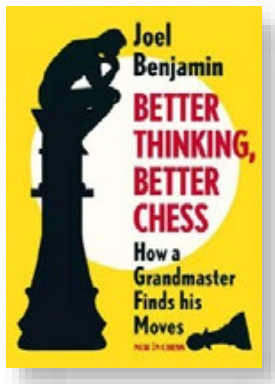
Vacillating between chess and math

Another facet of Lasker's character that surprised me greatly is his continuous vacillation between chess and mathematics. Even at the pinnacle of his career, Lasker was attempting to complete his academic qualifi-

Emanuel Lasker
Volume I
edited by Forster, Negele, Tischbierek
Exzelsior Verlag
★★★★★



Better Thinking, Better Chess
by Joel Benjamin
New In Chess, 2018
★★★★☆



cations and secure an academic post. For example, after decisively defeating Steinitz in 1897 to prolong his tenure of the World Championship, he enrolled at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. And yet in the spring of 1898, Lasker was again embarking on a chess tour in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. On the last day of March 1904, he finalized the work that would give him his greatest fame as a mathematician: a theorem that has entered mathematical literature as the Lasker-Noether theorem. On the 25th April, he was playing in Cambridge Springs in the very strong international tournament won in magnificent fashion by Frank Marshall with 13/15 (Lasker shared second with Janowski on 11/15).

Somewhat bitterly at the end of his life, Lasker reflected: 'Through

'Lasker ruined his popularity in England somewhat by writing several overtly nationalistic articles.'

chess I earned the most urgently required necessities of daily life, due to which many mathematicians of great renown (...) in their younger years came to naught. The world needs mathematicians very badly, takes their work for granted and pays them – with compliments. But my love for mathematics was to blame for the fact that I had to live in rather meagre circumstances for many a year. I could not stand burying my dream so quickly – my dream of becoming a professor on the basis of outstanding achievements, of therefore becoming a teacher of creative young people. But when I later accomplished acknowledged mathematical achievements, no one thought of putting me in such a position.'

And to round off the things that surprised me: Lasker's continual changes of affiliation (intended or actual). In 1892, he was admitted to the BCA tournament after stating that he had been living in England for seven or eight months and intended to remain in England. At Hastings 1895, England suddenly had a World Champion, as the BCM listed Lasker as playing for England! In the early 1900s, Lasker was intent on moving to America, partly in hope of securing an academic post there. In 1914, as war broke out, Lasker ruined his popularity in England somewhat by writing several overtly nationalistic articles in the Berlin *Vossische Zeitung*, comparing military tactics to a chess game and predicting victory to Germany. In 1932, Lasker played a bridge tournament in London... representing the Netherlands! At the 1936 Nottingham tournament, he represented the USSR.

All in all, a book that desperately needs to be bought! A fascinating portrait of a restless genius. Two more volumes to come... I can't wait! Five stars!

■ ■ ■

Around the same time, I also received *Better Thinking, Better Chess* by Joel Benjamin (New In Chess). I almost tossed it aside with the thought: That's not the one I'm interested in, but at the last moment I relented and dipped inside... and I'm glad I did. The best way to describe this book is a relaxed chat with a grandmaster, discussing the possible pitfalls that await you in your thinking process. As Benjamin describes it in his Introduction: 'Most chess books focus on providing chess knowledge and positions for training and study. Developing these skills can help bring players up to a higher level. But the work *during* games is no less important. I find that so many chess players could get more out of their abilities by doing a better job at the chessboard.'

Benjamin uses examples both from his own games and from his teaching practice (featuring the games of some of his young students) which gives a nice feeling of seeing the game as it really is played at the normal level, rather than at the stratospheric level of the top players. I'll give you an example of what I mean by quoting from a chapter I particularly liked: the scientifically titled 'Problems in calculation and cognitive approach'. Benjamin makes a number of interesting observations:

1. Mistakes often come early in the thought process

'Calculation failures are rarely due to difficulty with long variations or hidden moves. (...) It is often lack of commitment to accurate calculation that trips people up.'

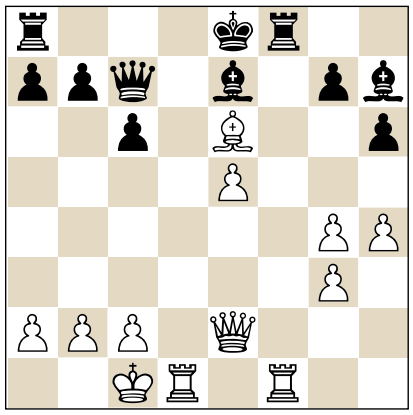
2. Think of 'Forcing Chess Moves' (the title of the book by Charles Hertan, also published by New In Chess)

'It suggests a truism that I can't remember seeing articulated before, that players should start calculation by examining the most forcing moves – checks, captures, attacks on pieces. From there we can resolve to examine forcing move candidates to a depth of say, three or four moves.'

The second point struck a chord with me. I remember studying some Tal games for my blog some months ago, and it surprised me how much of Tal's

attacks involved simple captures. Take this example:

Mikhail Tal
Geza Fuster
Portoroz Interzonal 1958

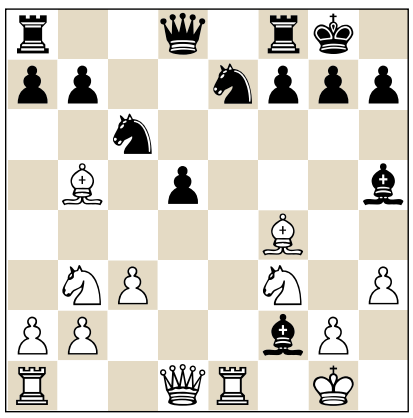


position after 19...♖f8

I remember staring at this position for a couple of minutes, thinking of 20.g5 or some such idea before I suddenly exclaimed 'Idiot!' and played the obvious...
20.♖xf8+ What could be simpler than a capture? As Benjamin says, however, you don't always think of the simple moves!
20...♗xf8 21.♕f3 ♕e7 22.♕b3 ♖b8 23.♗d7+ ♕xd7 24.♖xd7 ♔xd7 25.♕f7+ ♗e7 26.e6+ ♔d8 27.♕xg7 1-0.

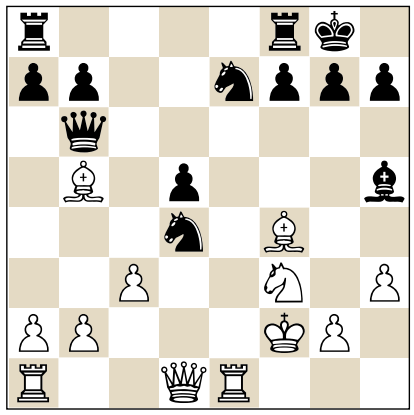
Now let's see a nice example of the first point:

Noah Flaum
Sophie Morris-Suzuki
Philadelphia 2017

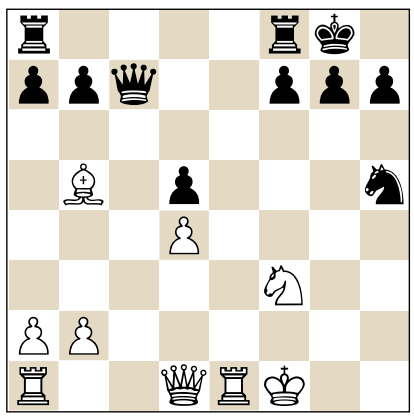


position after 13...♗xf2+

Does this actually work? Black spent 11 minutes on this decision but had a typical kind of blind spot which her opponent shared.
14.♔xf2 ♕b6+ 15.♘bd4 ♘xd4



Here White thought for 4 minutes and found a clever way to hang on to the extra piece. However after:
16.cxd4 ♘g6 17.♗c7 ♕xc7 18.g4 ♘f4 19.gxh5 ♘xh3+ 20.♔g2 ♘f4+ 21.♔f1 ♘xh5



Black had reasonable compensation for the piece, and in fact later achieved a winning position.
That would imply that the sacrifice was a bit of a speculation but playable. However, there was a giant hole in the calculation. Both players fell victim to an assumption: it makes no sense to capture with the queen because the rook will be hanging in the corner. But this is in fact the refutation of the sacrifice. Let's return to the position after 15...♘xd4.
16.♕xd4 ♕xb5 17.♖xe7 ♕xb2+ 18.♕d2 ♕xa1 19.♖e1
And the queen is trapped in the corner. Both players were talented enough to find clever resources but glossed over the most important tactical point. 16.♕xd4 may feel unlikely, but it eliminates the ...♘e7-g6 option for Black. It is a wise step to calculate at least a half-move beyond the last capture in a tactical variation – that is to confirm that you cannot only take material, but you can do it safely!

All in all, an unexpected treat! Four stars!

'The best way to describe this book is a relaxed chat with a grandmaster, discussing the possible pitfalls that await you in your thinking process.'

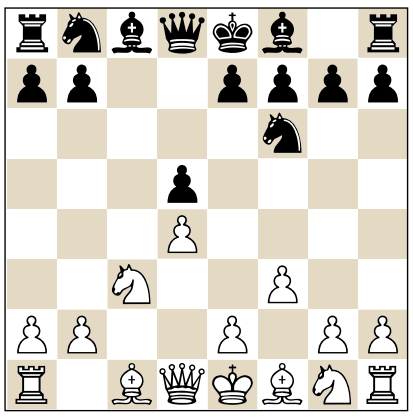
Simon Williams has been busy recently with two DVD's for ChessBase: one on the Exchange Slav: *Simple but Powerful: Exchange on d5 in the Slav and the Queen's Gambit*, and one on the Queen's Gambit Declined 5.♗f4: *A Dynamic Weapon against the Queen's Gambit Declined – 5.♗f4*.

Williams is not always the most concise of presenters, but he is unfailingly enthusiastic and strongly focused on giving the viewer the minimum number of lines to be able to play an opening properly rather than providing reams of long variations. As you might expect, this approach works better for some openings than for others. I felt that the analysis in the DVD on the QGD was erring on the light side, particularly in intricate variations such as the old main line (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.♕c2 ♘c6 9.a3 ♕a5 10.0-0-0). I felt that I had been entertained, but possibly learnt too little!

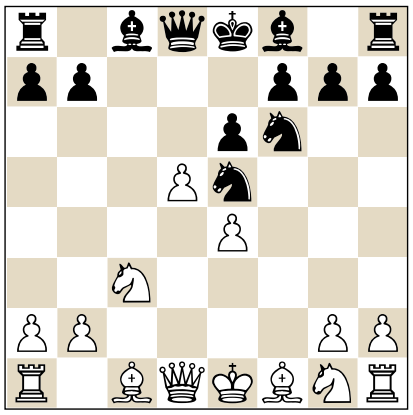
The other DVD works much better and Williams does his usual nice approach of offering a choice of

A Dynamic Weapon against the Queen's Gambit Declined – 5.♗f4
by Simon Williams
ChessBase DVD, 2018
★★★☆☆

lines – the normal solid main lines as well as something spicy. This time, the idea that caught my eye was:
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.f3



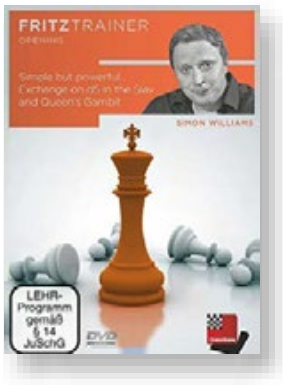
The Berliner Exchange Slav. I first saw this line mentioned in former Correspondence World Champion and computer programmer Hans Berliner's *The System*, with the main line given as: **5...♘c6 6.e4 dxe4 7.d5 ♘e5 8.fxe4 e6**



Unfortunately, Berliner was very cagey about this line: 'Despite the fact that there are numerous violent attacking attempts here, and I have spent hundreds of hours on this, including much computer help, I have not been able to find any concrete advantage for White.'

It just shows you how times change!

Simple but Powerful: Exchange on d5 in the Slav and the Queen's Gambit
by Simon Williams
ChessBase DVD, 2018
★★★★☆



When Berliner's book came out in 1999, I scoffed a little at all these ridiculous opening ideas. Fifteen years' work with engines later, nothing seems stupid anymore!

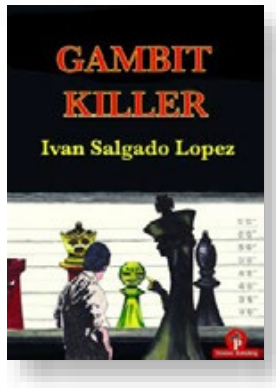
In any case, Simon Williams does a pretty good job in this DVD of making me enthusiastic for the Exchange Slav, which is not something I'd ever think I'd say! 3 stars for the QGD and 4 stars for the Exchange Slav.

■ ■ ■

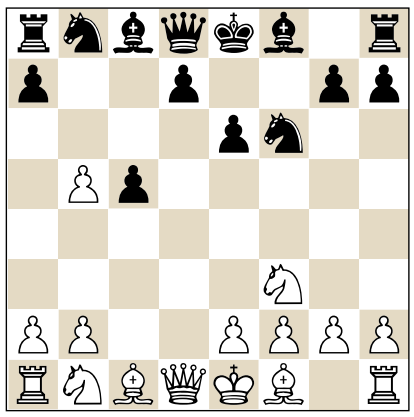
The last book I review this month is a delightful 160-page effort from Ivan Salgado Lopez called *Gambit Killer* (Thinkers Publishing). There are a lot of books out there with such a title and you often see the same 'refutations' cropping up again and again (and the same omissions!). This book is something quite different. Seven major gambits against 1.d4 – such as the Budapest Gambit, the Blumenfeld Gambit, the Von Hennig-Schara Gambit and the Albin Counter Gambit – are analysed in detail, with a separate section for bizarre gambits such as 1.d4 ♘f6 2.g4 ! As an extra little bonus, if White has interesting gambit approaches against a related opening (for example the Marshall Gambit against the Tarrasch – 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.e4), then Salgado Lopez puts some work into that too!

In each of the major sections, Salgado Lopez gives a great deal of background, explaining the ideas behind the gambit and demonstrating some key historical games before thoroughly explaining the reasoning behind his recommended approach. And his recommended approaches are by no means standard

Gambit Killer by Ivan Salgado Lopez
Thinkers Publishing, 2018
★★★★☆



or well-known... actually there were a couple of openings where I muttered 'Ah... for heaven's sake, Ivan!', as I suddenly saw some nice knowledge of mine on the page! Without giving too much away, I can give an example of the type of explanation I liked so much in the book. In Chapter 2, Salgado Lopez discusses the Blumenfeld Gambit: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 b5 5.dxe6 (Salgado Lopez also spends a little time on alternatives to accepting the gambit, such as 5.♗g5, 5.♗f4 and 5.e4 – a gambit from White in response!) 5... fxe6 6.cxb5



Salgado Lopez identifies the key motif in this position – whether Black should play ...d5 or not – and explains extremely clearly which of Black's common moves – 6...d5, 6...♗b7 and 6...a6 – is the most accurate and what the move order considerations are. He also of course suggests an approach against all of them. It's real grandmaster stuff that could only come from an exponent of the line – I certainly didn't know all of it! The book is also written in a chatty, friendly manner that is easy to read and digest. Required reading for any 1.d4 player, and for anyone foolish enough to play gambits against the best first move on the board! A really good book – 4 stars! ■

Just Checking

Alina Kashlinskaya

CURRENT ELO: 2470

DATE OF BIRTH: October 28, 1993

PLACE OF BIRTH: Moscow, Russia

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Warsaw, Poland

What is your favourite city?
For sightseeing, Jerusalem definitely.

What was the last great meal you had?
To be honest, a burger yesterday with my husband ☺.

What drink brings a smile to your face?
Mango lassi.

Which book would you give to a dear friend?
From what I recently read, *Shoe Dog: A Memoir by the Creator of Nike* by Phil Knight.

What book is on your bedside table?
Jenson Button's *Life to the Limit*.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
The Intouchables.

And your favourite TV series?
Dr. House and *The Good Doctor*.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Will Smith.

And a favourite actress?
Eva Mendes.

What music do you listen to?
Of late I've been addicted to Zumba, so all music in that style ☺.

Is there a work of art that moves you?
I like art in general. I'd say Ivan Aivazovsky's *The Ninth Wave*.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Don't really have one, but I recently studied a lot of books by Kasparov. I like his aggressive style and energy.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Recently *King's Indian Warfare* by Ilya Smirin.

What was your best result ever?
My 2705 performance in the Isle of Man.

And the best game you played?
Against Samuel Sevian in IoM.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Bai Jinshi-Ding Liren, 2017.

What is your favourite square?
That's d4, but don't ask me why ☺.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Every chess player is a bit selfish, but I am not sure if that's bad.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Gossip ☺.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
I try not to have them, but I will not use the same pen after losing a game.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or?
Facebook and Instagram.

How many friends do you have on Facebook?
2904.

Who do you follow on Twitter?
I don't have Twitter.

What is your life motto?
Everything is going to be OK.

When were you happiest?
I am happy every day I spend with my husband.

When was the last time you cried?
Yesterday, watching *The Good Doctor*.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
I don't really want to be anyone else than myself.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
My husband and my parents. It's the best company for me.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Try to find the positive side in every person, by my Mom ☺.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Skating. Actually I am about to start taking classes ☺.

What is your greatest fear?
I could make a list, but if I'd have to stick to the greatest, I guess it's being alone.

And your greatest regret?
I am too young to have real regrets.

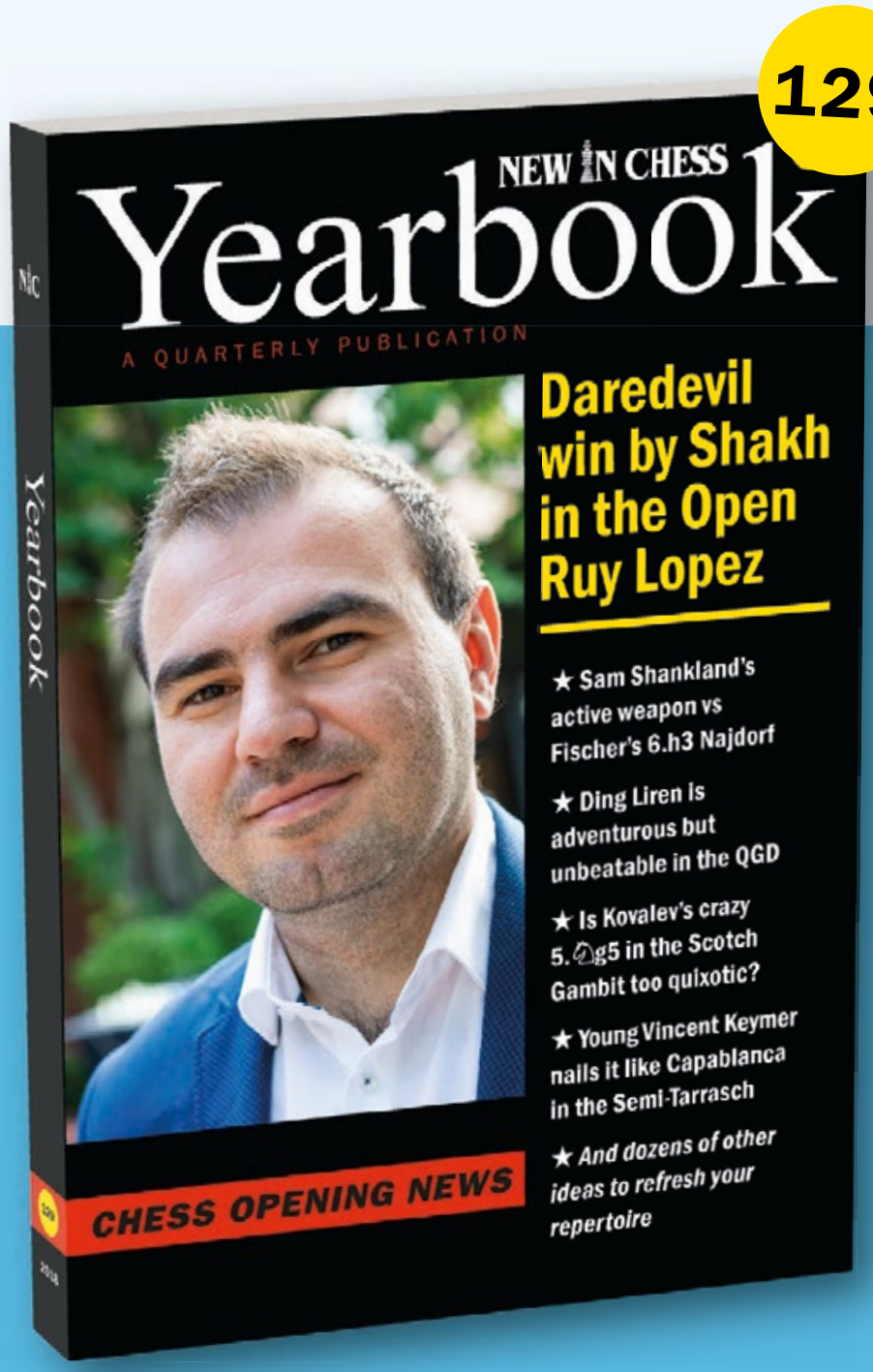
How do you relax?
Talking to my family, reading books or watching TV series.

What does it mean to be a chess player?
A lot of travelling and a lot of ups and downs.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
I don't think so ☺.

‘There is something about nearly every opening one can think of.’

British Chess Magazine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- **How does Sam Shankland react to Fischer’s 6.h3 Najdorf?**
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